Weird Tales

AUG. 1932

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by E. Hoffmann Price

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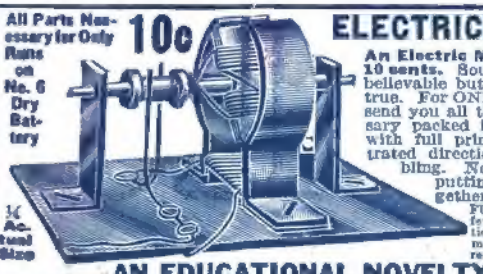

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Weird Tales

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME 20 NUMBER 2

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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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A famous novel that for more than a century has been acclaimed a masterpiece of weird horror

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LETTERS are still pouring in to the Eyrie about the reprinting of serials in WEIRD TALES. *Frankenstein* is liked by most of you who write in, but we have decided not to run *Dracula* when *Frankenstein* is ended, because too many of you have already read Bram Stoker's great vampire novel. Those of you who suggest that we drop the reprint department entirely are so far only a small minority; but many of you think we should abandon the policy of using serials in the Weird Story Reprint department, a policy which we began last year by printing Alexandre Dumas' interesting werewolf novel, *The Wolf-Leader*. But the question is still open as to whether we shall reprint some of the lesser known weird novels. Let us hear from you on this question.

"I wish to make a plea for the small town readers, of which I am one," writes Donald Allgeier, of Mountain Grove, Missouri. "I am sure that there are many readers of your wonderful magazine who can not get *Dracula* or *Frankenstein* anywhere. For instance, in my home town we have a public library which opens twice a week. New books are a rarity, and to find the book you want you must search all the shelves, and probably there is no copy of it there. I would probably faint if I found any weird novels there. And as for book stores, there are no such things here. One person here had a copy of *Dracula,* and as soon as this became known every one wanted to borrow it. I was surprized to see the number of protests against your reprinting *Dracula.* 'Oh certainly, every one can get this novel at the library or the book store,' they say. But those who protest certainly do not live in small towns."

Ralph Slater, of Hobart, Oklahoma, writes to the Eyrie: "I am heartily in favor of your reprinting *Dracula, Frankenstein* and other weird classics in WEIRD TALES. Your magazine contains enough material exclusive of the reprints to satisfy the readers that have already read them, and the reprints will make permanent friends of the readers that have not read them."

A letter from Richard Tooker, of Bismarck, North Dakota, says: "The current issue of WEIRD TALES makes it necessary for even the jaded reader to remark that there is something new under the sun. The vampire story is a peach, and *Frankenstein* is unbeatable. I urge the publication of *Dracula* and all the rest of the old masterpieces."

"Please do not publish serial reprints, especially *Dracula,*" writes Harold Hayworth, of Lynch, Kentucky. "It is most effective when read all in one night. I would

(Please turn to page 150)

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(Continued from page 148)

like to see Andreyeff's *Lazarus* and Merritt's *The Woman of the Wood* in your reprint section. *Lazarus* is, in my opinion, the greatest weird tale ever written." [We have already printed *Lazarus* in our Weird Story Reprint department.—The Editors.]

Writes Robert C. Sandison, of Denver: "My vote is emphatically for reprints, but personally I rather favor stories over novels. *Frankenstein,* for instance, drags terribly, and so does *Dracula.* But on the other hand, *The Wolf-Leader* was a pippin. If all serials could be like that, I don't see how any one could object. So many of the very old stories, though, seem rather ludicrous nowadays. There is Poe's story, *Berenice.* After reading the adventures of de Grandin, I, for one, was more inclined to laugh than to shudder at the idea of a maniac digging up a body, even though a living one, and pulling all the teeth out of it. What I actually did was yawn."

Frederick John Walsen, of Denver, writes to the Eyrie: "I have ever been an ardent reader of your unsurpassable magazine, and have been delighted with every issue. It is a real joy to read the stories, as they are most certainly the best of weird fiction. The best story that you have ever published was one by Robert E. Howard, a fine author, called *Kings of the Night.* The current issue of WEIRD TALES is the finest yet. There were three outstanding stories therein, namely, *The Brotherhood of Blood* by Hugh B. Cave, *The Last Magician* by David H. Keller, and *The Nameless Mummy* by Arlton Badie. Of these three, perhaps the best was *The Last Magician.*"

Harold Dunbar, of Chatham, Massachusetts, writes to the Eyrie: "I found it exceedingly difficult to select between *The Ghoul Gallery* and *The Brain-Eaters* for ranking place in the June issue. After long thought, I feel that the honor should go to the Hugh B. Cave story for its vivid descriptive passages and masterful climax. This author has a fine rolling style and a depth which few writers of weird fiction can rival. His *Brotherhood of Blood* in the May issue (which went into my file of stories worth saving) was outstanding for human interest and brilliant color, and now the author has shown remarkable versatility in presenting a grim and shuddery type of horror with equal effectiveness. I hope we may have more of Mr. Cave. *The Brain-Eaters,* by Frank Belknap Long, Jr., easily takes second place, and Seabury Quinn's serial third. The final paragraph of Clark Ashton Smith's little story, *The Weird of Avoosl Wuthoqquan,* should be classed among the few great climaxes of all time."

"Please accept this as another vote against reprinting the book *Dracula,*" writes Ernest H. Ormsbee, of Albany, New York. "I have a copy of *Dracula* in my library, and each of my friends who read weird stories has one. The public library reading rooms have copies; so it does not seem as though there would be many readers of this type of fiction who are unfamiliar with this great story. But I will second the request of a recent reader who asks that some other story by Bram Stoker be substituted."

"I am delighted to see Hugh B. Cave's name in WEIRD TALES," writes Doctor Frank L. Mead, of Medford, Massachusetts. "I never read the magazine before and was surprized at the array of talent. I have been reading Cave's stories since they first appeared in 'Classmate' some years ago. His stories *get* one, if you see what I mean. Give *The Brotherhood of Blood* a vote for me and put *The Ghoul Gallery* down as even better."

(Please turn to page 271)

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The Bride of the Peacock

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

A powerful weird novelette of devil-worship and the hellish underground fastnesses where Abdul Malaak and his crew concoct their ghastly rhythms

"*MADEMOISELLE,*" said Pierre d'Artois after a moment's reflection, "there is really no reason for your being alarmed at repeatedly dreaming that you are opening a grave. After all, a dream——"

"*Monsieur,*" she demanded, "does one in a dream break one's finger nails? Just look!"

She thrust her hands, fingers extended, squarely before our eyes. The nails were ragged and broken, and beneath them was a distinct trace of verdigris.

"I left them just as they were this morning, verdigris and all, to show you how I've been pawing at that door again. My new slippers and gown were torn, and soiled with green mold from kneeling before it. It's driving me mad!"

In her eyes was a terrible, haunted look that made them a starless, somber midnight.

Pierre d'Artois studied first the slim white fingers with their marred nails, and then the dark, surpassing loveliness of Diane Livaudais.

"But where do you walk?" asked d'Artois.

She shrugged her faultless shoulders, and made a despairing gesture of the hand.

"If I only knew! But I don't. First there was some one talking to me in my sleep. Though I couldn't ever recollect, exactly, what the voice said to me, I always had the impression when I awoke that there was a grave that I was to open. And somehow I felt that it was Etienne who called me. You know, Monsieur d'Artois, I was very fond of Etienne, and living in that house he gave me, it was only natural that I'd have him on my mind."

"When," queried Pierre, "did Etienne give you that house on Rue Lachepaillet?"

"It's over two years ago. Several months after he disappeared, I received a letter from him, from Marrakesh, saying that he was seriously wounded, and that if he died, he wanted me to live in his house on Rue Lachepaillet. Then, a month or so later, I learned that he was dead. Just a clipping from a paper in Marrakesh—a French newspaper, you understand—and a note in Arabic, which I had Doctor Delaronde translate. It confirmed the clipping, saying that Etienne's last words had been that he wanted me to have his house in Bayonne and the personal effects in it.

"So," she continued, "living in that legacy, and missing him terribly, I would easily dream of him, and wake with the sense of having heard his voice. I felt his presence, as though he were seeking to speak some final thought that his friend had not included in that scrap of Arabic script."

"By the way," said Pierre, "have you those bits of paper?"

And then, as Mademoiselle Livaudais took them from her handbag, d'Artois continued, "The voice became more insistent?"

"Pierre's blade projected a foot beyond his opponent's back."

"Yes. Though it wasn't really a voice. I would awake with the feeling that some one had given an order. An overpowering will forcing me to some vague task I couldn't quite remember except for somehow associating it always with a grave. A task I couldn't accomplish and couldn't evade."

"And always Etienne's presence?"

"Yes and no," she answered. "I don't know. An oppressing confusion. A dominant, crushing will. Not like Etienne at all. He was domineering—you may have known him—but not in that remorseless way. He loved me. Almost as much as I loved him. But this is relentless, inhuman. Yet I sense Etienne in it.

"And . . ." She again extended her fingers. "This proves that just last night I was trying to open the door of a vault. As on so many other nights. Gown tattered. Slippers soiled. Verdigris under my nails. I'm weary. Weary to death."

"You should have seen me sooner."

"It was so outrageous. So I kept it to myself. But now I want you to find out where I am going, and why, before I lose my mind entirely."

Pierre rose and from a drawer in his desk took a tiny vial, a part of whose

amber-colored contents he poured into a small, stemmed glass.

"Drink," he suggested. "It is a sedative. It will make you relax. You must relax. Look me full in the eye . . . better yet, look intently at the ring on my finger . . . then think of nothing at all. . . ."

I noted then that Pierre had seated his visitor so that she faced a strong, glaring light.

"You are weary from trying to remember. . . . Cease trying, and it will come to you. . . ."

Pierre's voice was droning monotonously.

"Don't try to remember . . . you are weary . . . weary . . . weary of trying . . . think of nothing . . . nothing . . . nothing at all," he persisted in soporific accents.

HER eyes were staring fixedly at the stone that flamed and pulsed dazzlingly on Pierre's hand. I'd never known Pierre to wear a diamond of any kind, much less that obtrusive, massive clot of fire.

Her lips half parted, and her breath came very slowly and rhythmically in cadence to Pierre's measured, purring syllables.

She was in a trance, induced by a drop of a hypnotic, and Pierre's compelling will.

Again he spoke, still with that murmuring monotony.

"You are sleeping . . . soundly . . . deeply . . . so deeply that you won't waken until I call you. . . . Do you understand?"

"Yes," she murmured, "I won't awaken . . . until . . . you call."

Then Pierre spoke in a voice of command.

"It is now last night. The voice is speaking. Repeat it to me!"

Pierre leaned forward. His long fingers gripped the carved arms of his chair. Perspiration cropped out on his brow, now cleft with a saber-slash of a frown. Diane stirred uneasily, made a gesture of protest.

"You will speak and tell me. I command and you must obey!" he said solemnly and deeply as the chanted ritual of a high priest.

I myself was ready to leap or yell from the terrific tension that moment by moment had been becoming more and more acute. I sensed a Power that was hammering at Pierre through Diane's resistance.

Then Pierre prevailed. The tension eased. She spoke in painfully clear-cut, mechanical syllables: and in *Persian!* Not the colloquial Persian of which I knew a smattering, but the rich language of the old days.

"Now, answer," demanded Pierre, "as you have been answering."

"Etienne," she began in French, but as mechanical as before, "I can't find the spring. But I'll return tomorrow night and try again . . . I can't understand what you are saying . . . the drums are too loud, and they don't want me to understand. . . ."

Etienne, Marquis de la Tour de Maracq, not dead in far-off Morocco, in some obscure tomb beyond the red walls of Marrakesh, but buried in one of the crypts that honeycomb the foundations of Bayonne. And she spent her nights answering him, and seeking him.

"But it couldn't be. The dead don't chant from their graves. It must be the hysteria of a woman mourning a dead lover," I insisted to myself as I heard those outrageous words.

And then I looked at Pierre. My insistence mocked me. He trembled violently. His lips moved soundlessly, and

he swayed slightly. He was exerting his supreme effort; but not another word could he drag from Diane. Pierre was beaten to a standstill.

He relaxed, and sighed deeply.

"Never to be too much damned *revenant,* I will meet you face to face, and you will speak to me!" he exclaimed.

He smiled that grim, cold smile I once saw on his face as he crossed blades one unforgotten night with one who on that night ceased to be the most deadly swordsman in France.

Pierre struck his hands sharply together.

"Enough! Awaken!" he ordered.

And, as Diane started, and blinked, and looked confusedly about her: "Tell me, *mademoiselle,* do you understand Persian?"

"Of course not," replied Diane. "But why?"

"You spoke Persian when I asked you to repeat——"

"Oh, did I say anything?"

"*Mais, certainement!* I commanded, and you spoke. And half the population of hell's back yard fought to break my control. But you spoke. Listen!"

Pierre repeated Diane's words.

"Did *I* say that?" she demanded incredulously.

"Indeed you did, *mademoiselle,*" I assured her.

"Why, who ever heard of such a thing?"

"I, for one," affirmed Pierre. "An illiterate servant girl, delirious from fever, chanted ancient Hebraic, to the mystification of the doctors. It developed, finally, that she had once lived with the family of a German savant, and used to hear him reciting Hebraic texts: and this was impressed upon her subconscious mind, which was released in her delirium.

"Similarly, some one has spoken Persian, either to your ear or to your mind at some time.

"Tell me, did you ever hear this, in any language?"

And Pierre recited:

"When I am dead, open my grave and see
The smoke that curls about thy feet;
In my dead heart the fire still burns for thee:
Yea, the smoke rises from my winding sheet."

Diane shuddered.

"Beautiful. But ghastly!"

As for me, I had heard and often admired that macabre Persian conceit. Yet this time an evil lurked in the amorous fancy that Hafiz chanted to some girl in a garden of Shiraz nine hundred years ago.

"And you replied, 'I can't find the spring.' You said that the drums kept you from understanding. You did well to come to me. I will fight this to a finish, *its* or mine."

"Do you really think it's Etienne calling from his grave?"

Diane asked this question in a hesitant voice, abashed at her outlandish query.

"*Mademoiselle,*" replied Pierre, "I am an old man, and I am none too positive about the impossibility of anything. Yet if he is speaking from Satan's throne room, I will find him and silence him, for no honest lover would haunt you this way."

Pierre rang for his man, Raoul.

"My good friend, Landon, will join me in this campaign. We will be your guardians. Raoul will drive you home. And this evening we may see you, Landon and I!"

Diane graciously offered her hand.

"Monsieur d'Artois, and you, Monsieur Landon, have restored my courage. I feel ever so much better. And do call tonight if you wish. *À bientôt!*"

With a wave of her hand, and a smile for the moment free from the shadow of the grave, she followed Raoul to the Issotta coupé.

"PIERRE," I said as the door clicked behind Diane, "when she was in that trance, you might have commanded her to ignore the voice."

"Not at all! That would be like putting a plaster cast over an ulcer. I must rather find and exterminate the cause of this outrageous thing that talks to her and makes her sleep a wandering nightmare. Never think that she told us more than a fraction of what she does and hears and says in her sleep. Something fought me face to face as I commanded her to speak: and as she spoke, I suddenly lost control."

"The devil you say! I felt it myself. . . . Do you believe——"

"Anything is possible in Bayonne," replied Pierre. "Anything may thunder and whisper from the ancient night of the passages and labyrinths that undermine Bayonne. Bayonne was founded by the Romans, whose legionaries worshipped Mithra and Cybele in subterranean crypts. The Saracens, the Spanish, the French, the Béarnais have made this the playground of armies, and have enriched the earth with dead. This is all soil well raked over, and alive with strange seeds. Apostate priests have chanted the terrible foulness of the Black Mass, and mediæval necromancers and thaumaturgists have pursued their crafts in those unremembered red passages and vaults.

"Sometimes the Church hounded them to the surface, and roasted them at the stake, good and evil alike: but more remained intact than ever were unearthed.

"I myself once saw a vault opened up when builders excavated for the foundation of a house, many years ago——"

Pierre shuddered.

"It is not so much what I saw as the inferences I was compelled to draw. Now from behind some brazen gate a Presence commands Diane to enter. Her dead lover calls her to God knows what terrible festival among the dead. Or Something impersonates the dead Marquis, for some purpose beyond imagining, some lingering trace of an ancient force that has come to life and strengthened itself through feeding on her susceptible mind.

"And now please dispense with my company while I study various things. Notably this clipping, and this scrap of a note.

"Those Partagas cigars are at your elbow, and there is a decanter of Armagnac."

So saying, Pierre left me to my own resources.

I PROWLED about his study, peering at the titles of books ranged row after row on their shelves; scrutinizing the clustered simitars, ripple-edged kreeses, keen tulwars, and the sheaves of lances and assegais standing in a corner. And here and there were *épées*, with their bell guards and slim, three-cornered blades: each a trophy of some encounter of Pierre's younger days, when the duel was not the comic opera affair it is today.

Raoul entered, presented Pierre's compliments, and left a tray of cold meats, cheese, and a bottle of thin, dry wine. Strange, how a fellow that keeps such excellent brandy would have such terrible sour wine! But it wasn't so bad . . . and neither was Bayonne . . . with a quiet month or so the most of which was to be devoted to acting as Pierre's second in fencing with a dead marquis who declaimed the *Diwan* of Hafiz from his grave in Marrakesh. But I didn't blame the marquis. That girl would make any one turn over in his grave!

And then Pierre reappeared.

"I see that you have survived those sandwiches *à l'américain* which Raoul constructed. Good! But I have a task for you."

"Lead on," I replied.

"*Alors,* my good Raoul will drive you to Mademoiselle Diane's house, where you will take your post at the door of her bedroom. You will stand watch, and if she walks in her sleep, follow her, even to the fuming hinges of hell's back door, but by no means wake her. And here," he continued, "is a pistol and a clip of cartridges, and a flashlight."

I thrust the Luger into my hip-pocket, tested the flashlight and found it in good order.

"It seems," I commented, "that we are not dealing entirely with dead men muttering in their graves."

"From what I learned — possibly I should say, inferred—while you were absorbing the most of that decanter of Armagnac," replied Pierre, "there is something in what you say. In the meanwhile, keep your mind strictly on your work, and do not be too free with that pistol. I will be on hand later to relieve you, and I prefer not to have you riddle me in error."

"Shall we leave the door open?"

"No," answered Pierre, "I have a most accomplished pass key. *À tantôt!*"

And Pierre returned to his holy of holies to answer the telephone as I followed Raoul to the Isotta.

"MONSIEUR LANDON," greeted the lovely Livaudais as she admitted me, "you don't know how relieved I am that Monsieur d'Artois has taken things in hand. But what is he doing this evening?"

"Lord alone knows, beyond busily studying that clipping and that note from the marquis' unknown friend in Morocco. And his telephone rang continually. He's hot on the trail of something, or he wouldn't have sent me to stand guard at your door tonight."

"Good God! Am I then in such danger?"

"By no means. I am here merely to follow you if you wander tonight."

"Splendid. Then I shall bid you good-night. Surely you'll forgive my being such an anything but gracious hostess? You know, it's been a trying day. There on the table is a decanter of Grenache, and cigarettes."

"Perhaps you might show me the switches that control the lights," I suggested. "I prefer to watch in the dark, but I may need light in a hurry."

After showing me the switch, Mademoiselle Livaudais bade me good-night. I selected the most uncomfortable chair in the living-room: not such a difficult task, with that array of somber teak, carved by artizans who, since they sat cross-legged on the floor, had no conception of comfort as applied to chairs—and set it near the bedroom door. Then I took a length of heavy thread I'd brought for that purpose, and tied one end of it to the door-knob and the other to a heavy bronze ash-tray which I set on a chair at the other side of the door. Thus if she opened the door, and caught me napping, the fall of the ash-tray would arouse me. Not that I expected to doze; but rather that I didn't want to take any chances.

I settled down to watch. It wasn't like military sentry duty, where a moment of drowsiness might cost the lives of an entire outpost. There was nothing to do but sit there in that exquisitely carved teak straitjacket, with my reflections for company.

And I wasn't the least bit drowsy. My mission effectively prevented that. I wondered if the dead marquis materialized and led her to a hidden panel, or called from the street, or tapped on her window-pane. The whole thing was outrageous: so much so that the marquis murmuring in his grave occupied a much smaller place

in my thoughts than this exceedingly lovely Diane.

In fact, I began to think with decided disapproval of the marquis; although, to be honest about it, he was handicapped, in a way.

And thus and thus. . . .

Then I wondered at the sweetness that subtly pervaded the room. Strange I hadn't noticed it before. Well, those Partagas cigars of Pierre's had been heavy enough to dull my sense of smell for a while. Certainly I'd not notice that delicate perfume. Like the ghost of incense. The very ashes of an odor.

I'm sure I wasn't asleep, and hadn't been even for a moment of that watch. And yet as I look back at it all, I couldn't have been awake.

Something was emerging from the darkness of Diane's living-room. I sat there, contemplating the shadow that materialized from the shadows, as though of all things in the world there was nothing more commonplace than that the blackness should coalesce into a shape.

I regarded with mild curiosity the silvery gleam that deliberately drew closer. I wondered what mummery was in progress.

It might of course be a knife. Perhaps I should really shift a bit to one side, or else it would pin me to the back of my chair. It came nearer. . . .

Then something within me snapped. I knew that I had been sleeping, with my eyes open and fully conscious. With a terrific start I moved, just in time to evade the stroke.

The intruder instinctively sought for an instant to wrench his dagger free from the unyielding hardwood which held it fast: so that I had him well by the throat before he abandoned his weapon and met me hand to hand.

He was lean as a serpent and long-armed as an ape. But I eluded his clutch, and drove a fast one to his jaw that sent him reeling back into the darkness. It shook him. It should have laid him out cold. But he came back for more.

As he recovered and closed in, a fresh poniard in hand, I drew my pistol and fired.

I saw him sag in the middle and crumple, riddled by that hail of lead at close range; saw another shape emerge from the darkness at my left. But before I could shift my fire, there was a heavy impact behind my ear: and then I saw nothing at all save abysmal blackness shot with livid streaks and dazzling flashes.

"Where's Pierre?" was my last thought as I met the floor, still clutching the pistol.

I DON'T know how long I was out. My head was spinning crazily as I opened my eyes and saw Pierre regarding me with mingled solicitude and amusement.

"So," he railed, "I leave you on guard and here I find you, flat on your face. No matter! Your stout skull seems none the worse.

"But what happened to the corpse?" queried d'Artois, as I clambered to my feet and dropped into a chair.

"What corpse?"

He indicated the pistol lying on the floor where it had slipped from my fingers when my grip had relaxed, and pointed at the empty cartridge-cases glittering on the rug.

"Some one . . . how would you say it? . . . was polished off. You never miss."

Flattering, but true.

That dark splash that stained the polished hardwood floor at the edge of the rug did indicate some one seriously riddled.

It all came back to me.

"They crept up on me. I was asleep

with my eyes open. I came to in the nick of time. And number two slugged me just as I accounted for number one."

I wrenched the poniard from the chair.

"Lucky I snapped out of it," I continued. "Good Lord, but I can't understand how I watched that fellow slip up on me without my moving until it was almost too late. I wonder if it could have been that perfume——"

"What perfume?" queried Pierre.

I sniffed, twice, thrice.

"Be damned, Pierre, but it's gone. That must have been it."

But d'Artois was looking at the poniard, and had nothing to say about vanished doors.

"Mais regardez donc! Here! Take the slant!"

He pointed at the inlay in delicate hair-lines of pale gold that decorated the slim, curved blade.

"Very pretty job of inlaying," I admitted. "Never saw a peacock more beautifully drawn."

"Imbécile!" fumed Pierre. "So it's only a pretty bit of engraving to you, this peacock! But it's a wonder Mademoiselle Diane hasn't been disturbed with all the rioting and shooting. Could she have walked out before our very eyes?"

"No. Look at that string knotted to the door-knob and the ash-tray. It's not been disturbed. She's still asleep."

"Nevertheless, I must look."

Pierre opened the door.

"Death and damnation! She's gone!" he exclaimed. "Walked right out before your eyes!"

Gone she was. Not through the door I had watched. And not through the windows, between whose bars nothing larger than a cat could have crept."

"No, and not up the chimney," announced Pierre. "Then where?"

"Through the floor or the wall, perhaps," I hinted.

D'Artois took me at my word. On hands and knees he explored the floor and the tiled hearth, poking and thrusting about with the blade of his penknife, seeking for some trace of a catch or spring which would release a trap-door or sliding panel. And then he devoted his attention to the paneled walls; but in vain. If there was any secret exit, secret indeed it was.

But Pierre was by no means discouraged.

"Let this rest for the moment," he directed, "and we will search the rest of the apartment."

"But," I protested, "that isn't finding Diane."

"Finding Diane," he replied, "may not be the most important thing at present. She has been carrying on her nocturnal wanderings for some time, and from each trip she has returned. It is likely that she will return this time also."

"How about trailing those assassins that nearly polished me off?"

"Eminently sensible," admitted d'Artois. "If we could follow them the trail would doubtless lead to the source of the deviltry. Your letting moonlight through one of them must have been most disconcerting. Look! They left through the door, and none too deliberately."

Pierre pointed at the trail of blood, and a footprint on the hardwood floor.

"But this will have to be investigated by daylight," he continued. "And that would advertise our moves to the enemy. Finally, I suspect that the trail would be lost very soon after it is picked up in the street. Let us rather inspect this house of the dead marquis."

And while Pierre did the serious inspecting, I prowled about, admiring the antique Feraghan carpet that shimmered

silkily under my feet, the floor lamp of saw-pierced damascene brasswork, the oddly carved teak statuettes from Tibet, curious bits of jade and lacquer: and on the mantel was a silver peacock with outspread fan.

"Look!" exclaimed Pierre, interrupting my contemplation of the rare and strange adornments of the room. "Behold! Unusual, *n'est-ce pas?*"

I took the book he offered me, thumbed its pages.

"What's so unusual about that? Looks like Arabic or Persian. . . . Good God, Pierre, it's bound . . . damned if it isn't! Human skin!"

"I saw that also. But I referred to the title."

"But that's the back cover."

"Que voulez-vous? Where would you have it in such a language? But look at the title itself."

"You forget that I can't *read* this scratching," I reminded Pierre. "Try it yourself."

"Pardon! Well then, it is entitled, *Kitab ul Aswad."*

"Of course. The Black Book. Manifestly appropriate. Title matches the color of the cover. Now this one," I continued, indicating a red-bound American best seller, "should be called *Kitab ul Ahhmar."*

"Idiot!" growled Pierre. "Have you ever heard of *THE* Black Book?"

And to forestall any further irrelevant replies, Pierre opened the book and read aloud in sonorous Arabic:

"Which is to say," he translated, knowing that the old, literary Arabic is too much for any but a scholar, *"God created of fire seven bright spirits, even as a man lights seven tapers one after the other: and the chief of these was Malik Tawus, to whom he gave the dominion of the world and all that therein is: so that God sleeps dreamlessly while his viceroy rules as seemeth good to him."*

"Odd enough," I admitted, "but what of it? Except that the evening is superabundant with peacocks. First they try to ream me out with a blade inlaid with a peacock; and then I stand here, admiring the silver image of a peacock on the mantel, and now you read me of Malik Tawus. Say, now, was that *malik* or *malaak?"*

"Malik," replied Pierre. "Although he has been called *Malaak* as well."

"And you end," I resumed, "by favoring me with a rich passage about the King, Lord, or Angel Peacock, according as the scribe splashed his reed or the tradition garbled the story——"

"I heard something in her room," Pierre interrupted.

And Pierre, who had preceded me, halted and whirled to face me at Diane's door.

"She has returned. While we babbled of black books."

"Impossible!"

"Then take a look," challenged Pierre.

I looked, and I saw.

Diane lay curled up in her great canopied bed, sound asleep. On her feet were satin boudoir slippers, torn and scarred and soiled.

"She went, and she returned, before our eyes."

And then Diane spoke: but not to us.

"I found the spring, Etienne. But I couldn't move the panel. I'll return tomorrow night. . . ."

"Good Lord, it's got her!"

"Don't wake her," commanded Pierre. "Let her sleep. We've been outmaneuvered. *Alors,* we will retire in confusion, get ourselves some sleep, and tomorrow—we shall see what we shall see."

After a later breakfast, Pierre and I drove across the river to the Third Guard's Cemetery, turned back to town, and then through the Mousserole Gate, across the drawbridge, and into the hills. D'Artois apparently was idling away his time; but having seen him open and smoke his way through the second pack of Bastos, which smelled no less of burning rags than the first pack, I knew that he was far from loafing. Whenever we passed the obsolete gun emplacements, casemates, or lunettes in the surrounding hills, Pierre would slow up, stare a moment, refer to a sketch, mutter to himself, and step on the gas again.

"Vauban built that . . . and that also was erected by Vauban . . ." was the sum of his comments.

We were retracing our course. The jovial, bearded and mitered statue of Cardinal Lavigerie welcomed us to Place de Théâtre.

"Doubtless we should pause for a drink."

"The *anis del oso* is not so bad," I seconded.

But in vain.

Pierre drew away from the curb, and thence to the left, skirting the park that lies outside the walls and moat on the side toward the Biarritz road. Again to the left, turning our backs to Biarritz, we headed into Porte d'Espagne and the old guard house, driving across the causeway that at this point blocks the moat.

"Vauban, it seems, built the whole works," I remarked. And then, "Hello! What's this? Stop a moment——"

But d'Artois cleared the breach in the wall, utterly ignoring my desire to pause and look.

And then he spoke:

"Jackass! Do you fancy that I didn't see those several men roaming about the green between the edge of the moat and the Spring of St. Léon with surveyor's instruments and the like? And need I impress upon you that they are by no means surveying, and that those instruments are by no means transits and levels? *Alors*, why need we pause and stare at those good men?"

All of which suggested that Pierre knew more about the goings on at the Spring of St. Léon than he cared to publish in the papers.

"Well, perhaps Vauban didn't build the whole works," I began, seeing that surveyors had been definitely dismissed. "I would imagine that we'd find the entrance somewhere near the ancient part of the city, not far from the cathedral. Possibly near that fountain——"

"Erected on the site of the castle of the Hastingues, taken by assault in the Eleventh Century by the Bayonnais," quoted Pierre mockingly from the guide book.

I ignored the jibe, and continued, "And to find it, we'll have to cover the ground stone by stone."

But Pierre was taking no hints that afternoon.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "It would take weeks. And then we'd be too late."

"What do you mean, too late?"

"Very much what I say, *mon vieux*. In a word——"

Pierre's gesture was painfully expressive.

"Well," said I, "the whole thing sounds like a Chinese dream. All of it."

"*Un rêve chinois*, do you say? *Comment?* Was it a Mongolian vision that came so close to pinning you to the back of your chair after you, an old campaigner, went to sleep with your eyes open an hour after taking your post? An Asiatic dream that you shot to ribbons when you awoke from your unaccountable sleep? We must work fast. And this time there shall

be no jugglery of taking her away and returning her under our very eyes."

"What do you propose?"

"We will both stand watch in her room."

"After what happened last night," I objected, "they may get both of us with some devil's trick. Like that whiff of perfume."

"I have considered that," replied d'Artois. "And we will see. There was never a peacock hatched who can twice in the same way outwit Pierre d'Artois. Nor is it likely that the enemy would repeat that same device. They have too many tricks."

RAOUL admitted us.

"Monsieur," he began, "a visitor is waiting for you in the study."

"Magnifique! And is she handsome?"

"Mais, monsieur, he is a foreign dignitary. An emir."

"Then offer him a drink, and assure him that in but one moment I will have the honor of greeting him."

In Pierre's study we found the guest, a lean, wiry fellow with a predatory nose and the keen eye of a bird of prey. A broad, seamed scar ran from his right eye to the point of his chin; and another stretched diagonally across his forehead. Strangely familiar mustaches fringed his lip. And then I remembered that during the past few days I had fancied seeing foreign faces in Bayonne, where scarcely any face is foreign. Yet those were lean and swarthy in a different manner, and were set off with mustaches whose droop and cut were decidedly outlandish. And just this afternoon I intercepted a glance that was too casual to be convincingly casual.

There was nothing after all remarkably strange about those fellows. Only—well, they didn't wear coat and trousers with the manner of those born to our stupid costume.

"Your servant," began our visitor after a pause that was just long enough to be as impressive as his bow, "doubtless announced me as Nureddin Zenghi, an emir from Kurdistan."

He glanced sharply about him, stared at me for a moment, and found my presence acceptable: all this while d'Artois returned the emir's bow with one of equal profundity and rigidity.

"But in all fairness," he continued, picking his words with just the suggestion of an effort, "I must confess that I am somewhat more than an emir. The fact of it is that I am——"

He lowered his voice almost to a whisper.

"I am the Keeper of the Sanctuary."

"Ah . . . *Monseigneur le——"*

D'Artois paused to select a suitable title. Propriety above all else, was Pierre.

"Emir, if you must be formal, Monsieur d'Artois. Although I am incognito. Extremely so, in fact."

"À votre service, monsieur l'émir," acknowledged Pierre, and again bowed in his inimitable fashion, which I endeavored to duplicate as he presented me.

It is difficult to bow elegantly while seeking to keep a couple of fingers near the butt of a pistol in one's hip pocket.

"As I said," resumed our visitor, "I am Keeper of the Sanctuary at Djeb el Ahhmar, in Kurdistan, the center of the *Faith.* Viceroy, so to speak, of Malik Tawus."

Peacocks, I thought, were becoming monotonous. I thought of that dagger I had barely escaped last night, and that book in Diane's parlor.

"Moreover," continued the emir, "I am a friend of France."

The emir was impressive, but not excessively coherent, I thought. But Pierre was equal to waiting without committing himself.

"All of which I appreciate and respect. But pray continue, my Lord Keeper."

I wondered just what ax the emir wished to grind on the friendliness to France.

"Therefore," continued the emir, "I am here to seek your aid in doing France a signal service, and at the same time overthrow a malignant impostor."

"A pretender, I fancy, to the custody of the Sanctuary?" suggested Pierre, fencing like the master swordsman that he was, with word and steel alike.

"Precisely. And it will be very much to your interest to help me, Monsieur d'Artois. Indeed, the welfare of your *protègée,* Mademoiselle Diane Livaudais, is closely linked with my own success."

Pierre essayed a feint.

"You mean, *monseigneur,* that you will lead me to the hidden vault where Mademoiselle Diane spends her nights seeking to enter the presence that asks her to open his grave?"

The emir's brows rose in saracenic arches.

"That is interesting, of course, but most obscure," evaded the emir. "In fact, I am by no means certain that I understand what you have in mind.

"But," continued the emir, "this is what I have in mind: Abdul Malaak, who came from Kurdistan three years ago to seize the local sanctuary—yes, as you surely have learned from the events of the past few days, the servants of Malik Tawus gather in conclave here in Bayonne—Abdul Malaak has succeeded in using his occult science to gain control of the mind and will of your *protègée,* Mademoiselle Livaudais. And when his control is complete, he will use her as an outside agent to operate in his cause in France, as a spy, unearthing information from various prominent persons he will designate. She will to all intents and purposes be a charming, gifted woman, acceptable and accepted in the best circles: but in fact she will be no more than an automaton, her every thought and word dictated by Abdul Malaak, who sits in a *solitarium* behind the throne in the hall where the conclave meets."

"Ah . . . indeed . . . most interesting, *monsieur l'émir,*" replied d'Artois. "And is it presumptuous to inquire as to the nature of Abdul Malaak's plans?"

"By no means," assured the emir. "I am a friend of France."

There was the stone. Now for the ax he wished to grind thereon.

"Abdul Malaak has assembled a circle of adepts in occult science," explained the emir. "Some from Hindustan. Others from Tibet and High Asia. Many from Kurdistan and Armenia, and Azerbaijan, the land of fire. And each a master in the science of fundamental vibration.

"To give you a crude example—though to a mind like yours, an example is scarcely needed—a company of troops on foot marching in cadence can wreck a bridge. The note of a violin string which is attuned to the fundamental vibration of a goblet will cause the goblet to shiver to fragments."

"Precisely," agreed d'Artois.

"And going from the physical to the mental, let one man in a theater rise and shout 'Fire!' there will be a panic.

"Thus these adepts will concentrate in unison on whatever thought they wish to project: so that through the principle of resonance they will uncork the vast reservoir of hidden discontent with society, religion and politics that exists in France as in every country, and in the end effect the overthrow of established rule."

"As in Russia," I interposed.

"Exactly," assented the emir. "You also are a person of rare comprehension. And, to bring us up to date, I was not amazed at what happened in Spain not

long ago to the Bourbons. And being a friend of France, I am here to seek your aid in thwarting this powerful engine of destruction. Single-handed, I would be hopelessly outnumbered, for while I have friends in the circle, they have been corrupted by Abdul Malaak and turned against me."

"VERY well, *monsieur l'émir,* I am with you, heart and soul. But tell me, is it true that the Marquis de la Tour de Maracq is dead?"

"Who says that he is dead?" countered the emir.

"It has been written," replied Pierre.

"What is written may be history, or prophecy. Who can say?"

Score one for the emir. He didn't know whether Pierre was for or against the marquis. He was sure of Pierre's interest in Diane, and in friends of France.

"May I ask—and I trust again that I do not presume," said Pierre, "—why it is that you are so anxious to thwart Abdul Malaak's plans? I mean, you comprehend, aside from your friendship for France."

"That is simple. Our cult is divided by a schism. There are those who seek temporal power, and those who care only for peaceful spreading of the cult of Malik Tawus, the Lord of the World. We believe that He has no need of or desire for political machinations in His behalf, and that in due course, the Lord of the Painted Fan will Himself assume the throne of the world, and exalt those who believe in Him—just as your early Christians said of the Nazarene.

"Now be pleased to give me a pencil and paper. I will make you a sketch."

The emir hitched his chair up to Pierre's desk.

This was a bit too good to be true. I remembered that saying about Greeks bearing gifts. The events of the past two days had likewise made me wary of altruistic Kurds. I loosened my pistol.

D'Artois caught the move from the side of his eye, and shrugged his shoulders negligently.

"Start at Porte d'Espagne," began the emir, as he traced a line. "Then——"

But he spoke no further.

Something flickered through the open window the emir faced. He pitched forward, clawing at his chest. I drew and fired, then leaped to the window, and fired again, not with any hope of hitting the figure that was disappearing around the first turn of the alley just as I pressed the trigger, but at least to give him my blessing.

"Give me a hand," said d'Artois.

The hilt of a dagger projected from the emir's chest. He shuddered, coughed blood which joined the stain on his shirt-front.

"Porte d'Espagne . . . to the left . . . great peril . . . take . . . many . . . armed . . . men——"

He clutched the hilt of the dagger, tore open the front of his shirt, and with a final effort, snatched from about his throat a thin golden chain from which depended a tiny amulet: a silver peacock with tail fanned out and jewelled with emeralds.

Neither d'Artois nor I could understand the utterance that was cut off by another gush of blood.

"Tout fini!" exclaimed Pierre. "He offered us this when he knew he couldn't give us even another scrap of information. This glittering fowl must be a token of admittance."

"Draw the shades!" commanded d'Artois. "And get away from that window. Likewise, stand guard until I return. On your life, admit no one. Not any one."

"The police?" I suggested. "I fired two shots."

"I will handle the police. No one must

know that the Keeper of the Sanctuary is dead. As long as they are in doubt, we have a weapon against them: for they thought him important enough to kill him before he could tell his story."

As d'Artois dashed out, I barred the door after him.

I COULD hardly share Pierre's optimism about the police. Here we had a stranger in the house, neatly harpooned with a knife. And what a story we'd have to tell! Some one tossed a dagger through the open window just as the Keeper of the Sanctuary was to explain where Diane wandered every night to claw at the door of a vault whose occupant commanded her to open his grave. Even an American jury would choke at a tale like that!

I picked up one of the drab little things which in France pass as magazines, and come across an article on the prevalence of murder in the United States.

"This is good," I reflected. "Now here in law-abiding Bayonne, I sit peacefully at the door of a lady's bedroom, and some one tries to dissect me with a nicely decorated dagger. The next day, a visitor has his conversation punctuated by a knife thrown through the window by parties unknown. . . ."

I shifted a bit more out of range of the window, and checked up on the cartridges in the Luger.

"To crown it, I'll get buck fever and let daylight through Raoul or Pierre when they enter. Or maybe they'll find me here, deftly disembowelled and marked, 'opened by mistake.'

"Open my grave and see the smoke that curls about thy feet! . . ."

I was developing a marked dislike for Hafiz. That old Persian was distinctly macabre. Then this one:

"If the scent of her hair were to blow over the place where I had lain dead an hundred years, my bones would come dancing forth from their grave. . . "

Then I wondered how Diane's phantom lover tied into the psychic-vibration scheme of turning France upside down. Now that I'd mulled over the felonious assaults and successful assassination, I couldn't help but have several thoughts concerning this exceptionally lovely Diane.

The click-clack of the knocker startled me.

"Qui vive?" I demanded.

"It is I. Pierre," came the reply.

"Enter, with your hands in the air."

But I recognized the voice, and returned my pistol.

"Eh bien, she is fixed. *Monsieur le Préfet* was reasonable."

"Do you mean that he swallowed that wild tale?"

"Mais, certainement. Though there was of course some talk of what in your charming country one calls a lunacy commission; but in the end I prevailed."

THAT evening Pierre and I called on the lovely Livaudais.

"Mademoiselle," began Pierre after acknowledging Diane's greeting, "you eluded us last night. But this time we will be more vigilant."

D'Artois deposited a large and very heavy suitcase on the floor.

"Oh, but you must be planning an extended visit, with all that luggage!" laughed Diane.

"And why not? Monsieur Landon and I keeping you under surveillance all the way around the clock, *n'est-ce pas?* But tell me, did we disturb you last night? Am I forgiven——"

"And so it was you that broke my cut-glass decanter and spilled wine all over the rug. But no, I didn't hear a sound."

" 'Tis well!" exclaimed Pierre. "I would have been desolate had we awakened you. And I shall send you a new decanter, all filled with my own Oporto."

"Monsieur d'Artois, you're a darling.

But how in the world am I to sleep tonight, with the both of you standing guard, staring at me as though I were a dodo come to life?"

"Simple enough. Take a bit of this sedative. It won't drug you so that you won't hear the voice."

"Well, why not give her a heavy shot of it," I suggested, "so that she won't hear the voice at all, and leave that devil behind his sepulcher door chanting in vain."

"Not at all!" objected Pierre. "She must find the way to open the door, and pass through, and fulfil that which has been impressed upon her subconscious mind. Then, after she has done that, we shall land like a ton of those bricks. I, Pierre d'Artois, will land in person; and henceforth, *Mademoiselle* will see no tombs by night."

Then, to Diane: "It is now passably late. Suppose that when you have arrayed yourself in . . . should I most appropriately say, walking-costume? . . . take a bit of this sedative. And then we will stand guard, we two."

As the door of Diane's bedroom closed, I turned to d'Artois.

"Why that suitcase? It's heavy as a locomotive."

"That you will understand before the evening is over. I have there various things which I may need on a moment's notice: though I can not say at what moment.

"We are fighting an organization that has infiltrated its members into every stratum of society. And by this time you have no doubt that you and I are marked and sentenced on account of our association with Diane.

"We are not only contending with enemies skilled in armed encounter, but equally gifted in psychic conflicts. Witness, for example, how this so lovely Mademoiselle Diane——"

"Taking my name in vain again?"

Diane opened the door and revealed herself in a negligée of blue silk curiously shot with gold. I wondered that Etienne hadn't bequeathed her his château as well as his house in Bayonne.

"But I assure you it was complimentary," replied Pierre. "And here is your potion."

She accepted the glass, sampled its contents, drained it, stood there, the smile slowly fading from her features. Then she shuddered.

"These engagements with the dead . . . I'm so glad I won't be alone tonight. . . . Good-night, *messieurs!*"

Vainly enough, we wished her a good-night also, this incredible girl who could still, at times, smile.

Then d'Artois took from his suitcase a coil of flexible insulated wire, very much like the extension cord they use to increase the range of a vacuum cleaner. In addition to the lamp and reflector at one end, there was a small portable snap-switch, and a tiny globe scarcely larger than those used as Christmas tree decorations. This layout Pierre plugged in at a baseboard outlet, a convenience which is most unusual in Bayonne.

As PIERRE uncoiled the wire and pulled it along the wall, I glanced again at the chair I had occupied the night before. Diane had accepted Pierre's myth about the shattered decanter, and hadn't noticed the scar in the back of the chair. But that one look was enough to bring out a sweat on me.

Then I thought of the hurled knife which had cut short the remarks of Nurreddin.

"Mademoiselle from Bar le Duc, parlez vous . . ." I hummed as I fidgeted about.

"Tais-toi, imbécile!" snapped d'Artois. "Bawdy to the last."

Which of course was unjust in the extreme, as I'd spent hours trying to teach

Pierre the proper rendition of that classic.

"Surely, she is asleep by now," he continued. "And like you, I likewise would whistle to keep up my courage. But give me your pistol," said d'Artois.

"How come?" I demanded as quietly as I could at that outrageous order.

"You are no less on edge than I am. And you shoot damnably straight. If by mistake you pointed that siege gun at me or Diane, you would have long regrets. And anyway, we want no disturbance or shooting. The enemy can't see us, though they must know we are here; and they must not hear us."

I surrendered the pistol. Pierre was right, of course, but with the start I made last night, I had begun to take an interest in that excellent gun.

"*Eh bien,* let us take our posts," directed Pierre.

I followed him into Diane's room, where he set up the reflector and lamp in a corner so that if the circuit were completed, the entire room would be illuminated.

"Take that chair and draw it up. Thus. Now mark well the position of mine."

Pierre stood at the wall switch.

"Should you catch a glimpse of a very faint bluish light, don't dive for it. It's just the pilot light of this lamp I've set up in the corner. As long as it glows, I'll know that the . . . what do you call her? . . . the juice is on, and that I can depend on light when I need it.

"Ready? Good!"

The wall switch clicked us into darkness. The sinister watch was on.

SITTING in a lady's bedroom in Bayonne does not sound so terrifying. But when the lady is awaiting summons from the dead, and when the dead sends living envoys with keen knives, it is yet again something else.

I wondered whether I'd fall asleep with my eyes open, and whether d'Artois could resist that damnable influence, whatever it had been.

Have you ever been in Morocco and heard the drums thump-thumping in the hills, calling the tribesmen to revolt? My heart was giving a perfect imitation.

Diane's breathing was soft and quiet and normal.

Silence from Pierre's post. Once in a while I caught a passing glance of the bluish-green pilot light, as he noiselessly shifted in his chair. Lucky he told me about that light! And once I heard him draw a deep breath. Just a deep breath. But infinitely expressive!

It was getting d'Artois too. Not a comforting thought.

The clock in the cathedral chimed twelve. And then the quarter, ages later. Then the tension eased. It is born in us to place all diablerie at midnight: and that having passed uneventfully, I felt that nothing would happen until tomorrow night, when I'd be in a much better frame of mind. Thoughts would be so much more collected. . . .

My relief was premature.

I felt rather than heard a vibration pulsing through the room. It was as though I watched some one beating a kettle-drum at great distance, getting the rhythm by seeing the drummer's body sway to the cadence instead of actually hearing it.

Then, finally, the pitch increased into the lower limits of audible vibration. I could hear it. Tum-tumpa-tumtum-tumpatum . . . low and massive thundering from across the wastes of space. The drumming of Abaddon of the Black Hands.

It filled the room. It was an earthquake set to a cadence.

I heard a soft, sulfurous cursing from Pierre's side of the room.

Then a hand on my shoulder.

"It is I. The pilot light is out. They have cut the house wires. We are watched. *And there will be some one sent for us.*"

The drumming was reaching a more resonant pitch, so that the walls of the room amplified it.

Diane stirred in her bed. The voice was calling her to the hidden tomb.

"When I am dead, open my grave and see . . ."

I could almost hear that sweet, rich Persian verse as an overtone of that sonorous drumming.

"They are here!" whispered d'Artois. "I can feel them."

"And we're in the dark."

"Here, take this flashlight." Pierre thrust it into my hand. "Quick, toward the window!"

The circle of light revealed a white-robed intruder armed with a drawn simitar.

"Shoot him!" I whispered to Pierre.

"No. Hold the light! And stand clear!"

The intruder stared full and unblinking into the brilliant flashlight. His eyes were sightless and staring. He advanced with the fluent, slinking motion of a panther, straight toward us.

Then it all happened in an instant.

D'Artois with his chair parried the sweeping cut of his adversary's simitar, and as he parried, he sank, squatting on his left heel and simultaneously kicking upward with his right foot.

Perfect, and deadly.

The enemy dropped in his tracks. His blade fell ringing to the floor, and in a flash d'Artois had the simitar.

"Keep the light on the window!" cried Pierre.

The companion of the first invader dropped fully into the circle of light. After him came a second. Both were robed like the first, and armed with simitars. And both stared sightlessly; yet as certainly as though they saw, they poised themselves like great cats, gathered for the final leap to overwhelm us.

Great Gol! Noise or no noise, why didn't d'Artois fire?

"Use your gun!" I croaked, trying to yell and whisper at the same time.

Facing those blades, empty-handed——

Christ! Was Pierre asleep with his eyes open, as I had been the night before?

Then a glittering streak from the darkness at my side, and the first one dropped, shorn half asunder by Pierre's simitar stroke.

"Two!" grunted d'Artois, and drew back on his guard for an instant, just out of the beam of the light.

But before he could advance, the third leaped forward, covered in his charge by a circle of flaming, hissing steel——

Clack-clack-clack!

Pierre was parrying that blind assault, cut for cut. Parrying a desperate, reckless whirlwind of steel, stroke after stroke.

Then he slipped through the mill, and sank forward in a lunge.

I saw Pierre's blade projecting a foot beyond his opponent's back. The enemy was too close to use his simitar. I picked up a blade and struck his weapon from his grasp, lest he maul Pierre to a pulp with it, since he couldn't slice him to pieces.

But that didn't stop him. He gripped Pierre's shoulder and drew himself forward, pulling Pierre's blade still further through his own body in order to close in.

I hacked again and again, in a frenzy lest that madman tear d'Artois to pieces with his bare hands.

"Tenez!" gasped d'Artois. *"C'est fini."*

He disentangled himself from the slashed, hacked body. As a surgeon or butcher, I'd never qualify, the way I mangle things when I hurry.

"Quick! That first one——"

D'Artois snatched the red blade from my hand, and with a single stroke decapitated the one who was rising to his knees and groping for his blade.

"Look!" exclaimed Pierre.

Diane, sitting on the edge of her bed, was slipping her feet into a pair of satin mules. It had seemed several lifetimes to me, from the time that d'Artois had advanced, armed with a chair, against the first intruder, until he had finished the third; but so swiftly had he worked that Diane had scarcely time to get out of bed, and find and don her robe and slippers.

"She's on the way."

"But where?"

"Idiot! She will leave the same way our three visitors entered. Look!"

WE FOLLOWED Diane with the beam of the flashlight.

She went straight toward the window, grasped the bars, and pulled herself to the sill.

"Follow her!" commanded Pierre. "Strip this one—his robe isn't bloody."

I stripped the one cleanly decapitated.

Those fellows didn't drop from the ceiling, but came down a shaft through the wall, whose opening was concealed by the window-casing.

"How about a turban?"

"This one will do. Wind it with the stained end in. Quick, now! Follow her. Put that damned turban on as you go. *Allez!*"

Diane had pulled herself up. A glimpse of her heels, and she was out of sight.

"Now my pistol."

"Take it. But hurry. "I'll be busy here——"

"What?"

"Va-t-en!" commanded Pierre. "Have I ever failed? Go!"

I leaped to the window-sill, felt, and found a void over my head, grasped the edge, and pulled myself up. In spite of our knowledge of the thick walls of these old houses, the existence of such a shaft would never have been suspected. The flashlight revealed a narrow passage not over ten feet long. At its end was a shaft leading down. I ventured a flash down its depth, and saw a ladder leading to a level that was well below the first floor of the house. At the bottom I turned, and faced a low archway which opened into a passage leading straight ahead.

Some twenty paces ahead of me was Diane. I slopped along as fast as I could in the loose red slippers of the enemy, and as I advanced, I wound my turban as well as I could on the march.

Diane was walking with a slow, almost mechanical stride, or she would have been quite out of sight. As it was, I quickly overtook her, and then snapped out the flashlight. Diane, deep in her trance, was utterly unaware of my seizing her robe so that she could guide me through the darkness.

She was stepping to the cadence of those drums.

I could distinguish now that the sound was of many drums: the roll and purr and sputter of tiny tom-toms against a background of solemn booming that made the masonry quiver beneath my feet. Yet the source of the sound was still far away.

Although the incline was not steep, it was perceptibly down-grade. We were turning ever so slowly to the left. The air was becoming damp and musty and cool. Our descent must now be taking us far beneath the uttermost foundations of Bayonne. Somewhere, below and to the left, was the brazen door that guarded the one who chanted in Persian and invited Diane to a conclave of the dead that were lonely in their deep vaults.

Ahead of us was a faint glow. I halted to let Diane gain a few paces, and then, hugging the left wall so as to gain the

maximum protection from the door-jamb in case there should be a reception committee waiting, I crept forward as silently as possible.

Then it occurred to me that unseeing automatons like those that Pierre had stopped only by hacking them to pieces would hardly be susceptible to surprize. And if more swordsmen, bound in a deep trance and directed by some master mind to overwhelm me, were waiting, I'd have my hands full. I wondered if a pistol would stop them . . . the Moro *jurmentados* down in Sulu, riddled with dum-dum bullets, continue their charge until they hack to fragments the enemy who hoped to stop them with rifle fire.

Well, at least those three swordsmen had been *alive,* and their blood was like any other blood when spilled.

I ventured a peep around the door-jamb. The passage opened into a small alcove which was illuminated by the red flames of a pair of tall black candles set one at each side of a brazen door. Diane was alone before the door.

She hesitated, half swaying on her feet for a moment, then knelt on the second of the three steps that led to the door. Where her fingers traced the arabesques and scrolls embossed on the bronze, the verdigris had been worn away. How many hours had she spent in wearing the seasoned bronze to its original color? Or were there then others who sought the same doorway? And if there were, when might they appear?

Evidently she was seeking the hidden catch which would open the door; the gateway of the tomb.

Surely Diane needed no light to further her quest. Then why these lurid candles? Had they a ritualistic significance, or were they for sentries, or acolytes that served the Presence behind the panel? I knew not what cross-passages I had unknowingly passed in the dark, and what swordsmen might be marching from any of them. Swordsmen, or worse. . . .

Then Diane spoke; not to me, but to the dead behind the door.

"I'm trying, Etienne, but I can't find the spring."

She rose from her task and retreated, turning away. Her eyes stared sightlessly at me. Then she wavered, tottered, and retraced her steps. Some compelling power was forcing her to resume her task.

I followed her, and looking over her shoulder, studied the embossing her fingers traced. Each curve, each figure, each floral and foliate form that could conceal the hidden catch she tapped, fingered, dug with her nails: but there was one she did not touch. And that one of all others seemed the only one that could control the lock: the center of a lotus blossom, close to the left edge. Even in that dim red light I could clearly distinguish a line of demarcation that separated the substance of the lotus center from the surrounding metal. Then why didn't Diane press it? Why had she avoided it, night after night?

But had she avoided it?

It was smooth and polished. Some one had fingered and touched it.

Diane herself. It all came to me: the door would not open until the Presence was ready for her arrival.

I watched her fingers working their way back and forth over the traceries of bronze, toward the center of the lotus blossom. She was touching it——

I took a hitch in my belt, slid the simitar and its scabbard back toward my hip, shifted the Luger.

Click!

The door yielded, swinging inward on silent hinges. The drums boomed and roared and thundered. Their vibrations smote me in the face like the blast of a typhoon. An overwhelming perfume

surged forth, stifling me with its heavy sweetness.

I leaped in ahead of Diane, advanced a pace toward the blank wall before me, then wheeled to my right, and saw him who made a madness of Diane's nights.

HE SAT cross-legged on a pedestal of carven stone. His arms were crossed on his breast. He was nude, save for a yellow loin-cloth that flamed like golden fire in the purple light of the vault. His face was emaciated and his ribs were hideously prominent. If he breathed, it was not deeply enough to be perceptible.

The drumming thunder ceased abruptly: and the silence was more terrific than the savage roaring pulse that had halted.

Dead?

Dead, save for those fixed, glittering eyes that stared through and past me. But they lived, fiercely, with a smoldering, piercing intentness.

Then some one stepped in between me and the Presence.

Diane had followed me, and standing in front of me, faced him.

Like him, she crossed her arms on her breast. Then she advanced with slow steps, not halting until within a few paces of the Presence. She knelt on the tiles, and bowed. Then she spoke in the expressionless voice of one who recites by rote a speech in a foreign language he does not understand.

"Etienne, I am here. I heard you from across the Border, and I have obeyed. I have opened your grave."

I stood there like a wooden image, neither drawing my simitar to cleave that living mummy asunder, nor my pistol to riddle him to ribbons. This couldn't be the Marquis de la Tour de Maracq; not this blasphemy from somewhere in High Asia, that might have followed the Golden Horde, ages ago. Yet she had called him Etienne. Then he spoke:

"Landon, it is not good that you have meddled and entered the *solitarium* behind the throne. Even the elect dare not enter here. But since you are here——"

He smiled a slow, sinister smile. His long lean arm extended like the undulant advance of a serpent.

"Look!"

I followed his compelling gesture with my eyes, and saw the brazen door swing slowly shut. It closed with a click of ominous finality.

I stared for a moment too long, held by the voice and the gesture. Just a moment too long. There was some one behind me. But before I could move, strong hands gripped my arms.

The Presence murmured a command. My simitar and pistol and flashlight were taken from me. The hands released me: and all with such incredible swiftness that I turned just in time to see my four momentary captors filing into an exit that pierced the wall, carrying with them my blade and pistol. As the last one cleared the threshold, a panel slid silently into place.

I had been a splendid guardian of the lovely girl who knelt at the feet of that creature on the throne!

"That door," resumed the Presence, speaking so deliberately that the moment of my disarming was scarcely an interruption, "is easily opened from the *outside*, by those we wish to admit."

Again he smiled that slow, curved smile of menace.

He looked down at Diane, and spoke to her in purring syllables. She rose from the tiles, and stood there, vacantly regarding us, Diane's body devoid of Diane's spirit.

"This girl and I," said the Presence, "have a few things to discuss. You will therefore be pleased to excuse us. . . ."

He inclined his head, and smiled his reptilian smile.

I saw his fingers caress the carvings near the top of the pedestal on which he sat. I leaped, but too late. The floor opened beneath me. As I dropped into the abysmal blacknesses below, I caught a glimpse of the purple light above being cut off by the trap-door lifting back into place.

I landed on my feet with force enough to give me fallen arches, and pitched forward on my face. The stones were cold and damp and slippery. I rose to my hands and knees, and crept cautiously along, feeling for openings in the floor, and hoping to locate a wall which I could follow to anywhere at all. A corner, or an angle, anywhere to get out of the heavy blackness and near something that would give me a sense of direction. Here there was only up and down, and neither north, south, east, nor west.

Caged in the subcellar of this subterranean vault; locked in the basement of hell's private office. And Diane in the hands of that animated mummy!

Finally I butted head-first into a wall. The stars unfortunately weren't of sufficient duration to let me see where I was. So I crept along, following the cold, moist stones.

My fingers touched a vertical bar: one member of a grillework which blocked my advance. I reached forward with my other hand and grasped another bar, felt my way along, right and left. It was a gate, hinged to the masonry at one side, and chained shut at the other.

Something tangible at last. Something to grip and struggle with. The gate yielded protestingly for a few inches until the chain drew taut. I could feel the heavy scale of rust and corrosion on the links. I tugged and pulled and pushed, but in vain.

Then I removed my borrowed robe, folded it into a compact pad which I applied to my shoulder. I backed off, carefully measuring my retreat, gathered myself, and with a running leap, charged the gate. The chain snapped. The gate opened. I pitched headlong ahead of me, amid a clatter of links and the clang of the gate's crashing against the wall.

Before I could regain my feet, some one landed on me.

CLEAN, manly fighting may have its place in the prize ring, and possibly even in the wrestling arena: but in hell's basement it is a needless grace. I shifted just in time to avoid the unknown's knee fouling me. Not to be outdone in courtesy, I closed in, and located his eyes, but before I could apply my thumbs to the best advantage, he broke my attack. Finally I backheeled him, and we both crashed to the paving. Luckily, he absorbed the shock, but it didn't stop him. He lacked the simian strength and terrible arms of the assassin of the night before, but he made up for it in agility and devastating rage. We both were approaching exhaustion from the fury of attack, defense, and counter-attack.

I yielded suddenly, to throw him off his balance; but I tripped on the loose piece of chain, lost my own balance, and failed to nail him as he pitched forward.

And I couldn't locate him. My own heavy breathing kept me from hearing him. I was trembling violently, and my mouth was dry as cotton. And if my heart pounded any more heavily, I'd burst wide open. Well, he must be in the same shape. So I sank to the floor, hoping to catch him with a low tackle, or to thwart him in a similar maneuver on his part.

But I couldn't find him.

"Come here, damn your hide!" I frothed, finally getting enough breath to relieve my wrath.

"Thank God, a Christian!" panted a voice not far from me. "And by your speech, an American. Let us be allies, what is left of us."

"And who might you be?" I demanded.

"A prisoner like yourself. Let's declare a truce, and if we must fight, follow me to where there is enough light."

The fellow sounded convincing enough. His English was the meticulously correct speech of an educated foreigner.

"Done. Lead on."

"Then put your hand on my shoulder, and I will lead the way," he continued. "To show my good faith, I will let you follow. Keep your head down. The masonry here is low, and very hard."

My enemy chuckled.

"*Mordieu!* but I have been deceived about American sportsmanship. You would have gouged my eyes out. You bit a nice morsel from my throat—*apropos,* I'll show you the right way to do that some day, if we get out of here alive. . . . Steady, now! On your hands and knees . . . here we are."

I followed him through a low, narrow opening that had been made by prying a few blocks of masonry out of place, and into a tiny cell illuminated with a slim taper. The ceiling was vaulted, and over a dozen feet above the floor.

"This has been my grave for some time."

He indicated the brazen panel in the wall.

"There has been entirely too much talk of graves in the past few days," I replied. "Graves with living occupants."

He stared at me curiously, almost replied. Then, seeing me eyeing the brazen panel: "*Mais non!* Even with your bulk and hard head, you couldn't budge that bronze. It doesn't corrode and waste away like the iron in this devil's nest."

"Well then," said I, "how do they feed you?"

"They let food down through a trap in the ceiling. Look!"

I looked up, and saw the outline of a trap-door.

"You look strangely familiar," I began. "I've never seen you, but somehow it is as though I had seen a portrait, or photograph, or heard you compared for likeness to some one I did once see, somewhere."

"No one has seen me for two years or more. But how did you run afoul of Abdul Malaak? Are you also an aspirant to the custody of the Sanctuary?"

He made a curious, fleeting gesture with his left hand.

"Hell's fire, *monsieur,*" I replied, "how many custodians, aspirant and actual, does this devil-haunted town hold?"

Then, without pausing for an answer, I threw it at him:

> "When I am dead, open my grave and see
> The smoke that curls about thy feet."

"*Comment?*" he exclaimed.

A home run! I continued:

> "In my dead heart the fire still burns for thee,
> Yea, the smoke rises from my winding-sheet."

He stared. I met his stare.

"*Que diable!*" he finally exclaimed. "Who or what you are, I don't know. But you know who I am: de la Tour de Maracq."

"And I am Davis Landon. This meeting with the gentleman who has chanted Mademoiselle Diane to the edge of madness is certainly a pleasure."

The marquis smiled wearily.

"Chanted, and to what end? From your quotation of Hafiz, I know that she must have heard me, but she couldn't get my thought. Certainly not thus far, at least. So I am buried here, and awaiting the bowstring, or the fire, or the saw and plank: whatever Abdul Malaak in his kindness orders when he has sufficiently poisoned my friends against me. I thought a while ago that they had discovered my loophole and were trying to stop my private explorations. So I gave you a good fight——"

For just an instant a fierce light flamed in his eye; and then that thin, weary smile again.

"This is puzzling," I protested. "I happen to know that she did get your message which you 'willed' or projected, or whatever means you used. Every night she wanders in her sleep to obey a summons, and claws at a brazen panel——"

"What's that you say?" demanded the marquis. "Wanders in obedience to my summons? *Wanders?*"

"Yes. From your house to the door of the room where that living mummy sits on his pedestal——"

"*Jésu!* From *my* house?"

"Yes. From your house which you willed to her on your deathbed in Marrakesh."

"But, *monsieur,* I never died in Marrakesh."

"That I can readily believe," I admitted. "But she showed me that letter from you, and a newspaper clipping announcing your death, and a note in Arabic from the companion of your last hours. And thus she accepted your legacy, the house on Remparts de Lachepaillet, where she was very conveniently situated to leave by a secret passageway to hell's front door."

THROUGHOUT my speech, the marquis stared at me, bewildered.

"I, dying in Marrakesh, willed her that house? . . ."

"Yes, damn it, and hoodooed her with strange dreams of graves to be opened, and voices chanting in Persian. And tonight I followed her through the gateway——"

"How's that? Followed her? Is she there?"

"Yes. And that devil touched a spring and dropped me into that dungeon before I could say aye, yes, or no. So you might tell me what started her wanderings."

"*Hélas, monsieur,* what can I tell——"

"When I quoted Hafiz you seemed to hear familiar words."

"Certainly. I did chant them. I also am an adept. And I chanted the verse of Hafiz for the sake of the rhythm; not to give her a command to come and release me, which she couldn't possibly do, but to ask her to communicate with Nureddin Zenghi, in Kurdistan."

"Why the verse, did you say? What has it to do with Nureddin? That is dense to me."

"*Pardon.* You are not an adept. But to put it simply, it acted merely as a carrier wave, as your radio experts would put it. It gave me a rhythm on which to impress my thought. I can't explain it briefly. But go into Tibet, and High Asia; to Hindustan, among the *faqirs.* Study at the feet of one who might still be found sitting at the feet of a column in the vast ruins of incredible Ankor Wat. Speak with the priests of the Eightfold Path. Piece all your gleanings together; and you will finally be able to project your thoughts to one with whom you are *en rapport*—if you have the strength of will. The knowledge is jealously guarded. But I found it.

"Had I gone further with the art, I could have projected *myself* from my body, and spoken to her. But I couldn't. Can't yet. And shan't live long enough to learn how.

"When I was reported dead, I was actually in this cell. My enemy tricked me in a contest of occult arts, and here I am. Abdul Malaak. . . . Servant of the Angel, as he calls himself. I see it all now. He forged that letter and clipping to get her into my house from which he could summon her to make the trip unobserved. And his concentrated thought, aided by the circle of adepts in the great hall, overpowered my message."

"But Nureddin did come to town."

"*Magnifique!* Maybe she did send for

him. And he will take the place by assault. He will not fail——"

"Nureddin has failed."

And I told what had happened in Pierre's study.

"Then we are doomed," said the marquis.

"Doomed, hell!" I said. "You suggested that we be allies. Now let me take command. Is it near your feeding-time?"

"Yes. So says my stomach," replied the marquis. And then, as he saw me glance once more at the trap-door in the crown of the vault: "Even if I leaped to your shoulders, I couldn't reach it."

"Who said that you had to reach it?" I queried.

"How then?" demanded the marquis. "They don't get close enough for you to take the guard by surprize as he gives me my food. If they only passed it through that door there!"

"I have an idea. Stand close to the wall, out of sight. Better yet, back out through that hole in the wall——"

"But——"

"Be damned! Ask no questions, *monsieur,* or my inspiration will leave me. I have a hunch. Are you with me?"

"To the death and to the uttermost."

I accepted the hand he extended.

"And there is another: Pierre d'Artois."

"None better," admitted the marquis. "There is no love lost between us, but he will not begrudge me any help given you and Diane. But even that d'Artois risks his head if he dares enter."

"Never fear about d'Artois," I reassured the marquis. "But while we have time, tell me this: who has the hold over Diane's mind? Is it you, or that dried-up thing on the pedestal?"

"Both, it seems. Though he is aided by his circle of adepts. With them broken up, his power would be comparatively little."

"But would that release her, breaking them up, and him also?"

"Yes. And I will die happy if I personally attend his breaking up. Into small bits, Monsieur Landon. If we get out of here alive, I will dismember him with my bare hands! And since she has obeyed the command, she can be awakened from the influence of the Power——"

"There they are now!"

The marquis beckoned me to be silent.

In my turn, I motioned him to crawl out of sight of the trap, and followed him.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est?" muttered the marquis, obedient, but puzzled.

"Wait and see."

We heard the trap open. A basket was descending at the end of a slim cord.

"Pull that basket up and let down a rope. That isn't heavy enough," I directed in Arabic.

"Why not, *ya marqees?"* queried the voice, somewhat taken aback.

"This isn't *el marqees, ya hu!"* I shouted. "Let down that rope and pull him up. He's still breathing, but he won't be when you come back with a rope."

From above I heard a mutter of voices.

"And who are you?" demanded the spokesman.

I heard the clank of arms. My unusual request had been passed along to the guard, doubtless. But as Pierre said, *toujours audace!*

"Come down and see, O heap of offal! One of the master's guests, O eater of pork! Would you argue with me?"

And then, aside to the marquis, "I've got 'em going."

The marquis grinned, and the fire returned to his eyes.

"Give me your rags," I continued, "and we'll fool 'em proper."

"Just a moment, *ya sidi,"* resumed the voice, "while we get a strong rope."

"Make haste then, eater of unclean food! I have much else to do than to

butcher *Feringhi* swine, down here in the cellar."

"Patience, master," said the voice.

I dug up from my memory a few epithets collected in Mindanao, and growled them in return. They couldn't understand it, and were duly impressed with my importance. By the subdued and respectful murmurings, they must by that time have identified me as one of the master's pet assassins.

But the occasional tinkle of accouterments and soft note of steel didn't reassure me. The death of the marquis and the lifting up of his body doubtless was of sufficient importance to detain a part of the guard.

A HEAVY rope, several centimeters in diameter, was let down.

"Give me more slack! Pigs and fathers of many little pigs, how can I tie this fellow's carcass with that little? And anchor it firmly up there. When you get him up, I'm coming after."

Then, to the marquis: "I'll go first, and you follow."

"No, let them haul me up. I can't climb a rope," he whispered.

"You're a damned liar, but since you want the first crack at them, go ahead. But remember you're dead. Don't start the show until I get there."

I tied a running noose and drew it up beneath his arms.

"All right up there! Heave away! And wait for me. I'll tell you what to do with him."

They heaved away.

"Well," I reflected, "I'll be in a pretty jam if something goes haywire and that rope doesn't come down again. That hothead——"

By the time the marquis reached the trap, I was in a sweat and a fidget.

"Hurry up there!" I roared. "And let that rope down. Drop him anywhere. He won't hurt you."

"Shall we hoist you, *ya sahib?*"

"Let that rope down, and silence, *ya humar!*"

So far, so good. I had them buffaloed.

I leaped at the rope, and hand over hand, pulled myself up. As I approached the opening, I gripped its edge with one hand, heaved myself through, and sprawled face down on the floor.

"He still breathes, master," said one, as he sought to help me to my feet.

"I forgot my simitar. Give me yours and I'll tend to that."

And as I was solicitously assisted to my knees, the hilt of a blade was thrust into my hand.

I leaped and slashed.

"Give 'em hell, Etienne!" I shouted.

And I laid about me, right and left.

The marquis closed in on the one nearest him, lifted him over his head, and dashed him head-first to the tiles. Then he snatched a blade from the floor, and came on guard.

The four survivors faced us, dazed by the swift turn. And then they charged. I hacked and slashed clumsily and desperately. Parried, and missed my *riposte*. Lashed out again, and had my blade dashed from my hand by a sweeping cut. Etienne, crouched on guard behind his whirlwind of steel, faced half to his right, saw my peril, and with a dazzling snick of his blade, sliced my adversary's sword arm half off: and back again to his party.

As I booted my disabled enemy into insensibility, I marveled at the incredible skill with which he held those three fierce Kurds at bay.

I gave my opponent's head one farewell bounce against the paving, picked up his blade, and joined Etienne.

"Gardez-vous!" he snapped. "I have him!"

He slipped forward in a lunge, blade slicing upward to disembowel his adversary; and back on guard again, with but two to face him.

They were too dazzled by that terrific attack to be aware of my presence. Thus my neck-cut to the one on the right was most creditable.

"Tenez!" commanded Etienne, as he confronted the survivor. "I need him."

Standing as though his feet were spiked to the floor, he waved me aside, engaged his enemy, parrying cut after desperate cut as coolly and effortlessly as though fencing with a blunt foil instead of with blades that sheared from shoulder to hip with one stroke.

The Kurd fought with the savagery of one whose doom stares him in the face. But in vain. He could not crowd or break through the hedge of steel that Etienne built with his leaping, flashing simitar.

Then the Kurd stood there, blinking and bewildered, staring at his empty hand. His blade clanged against the tiles a dozen feet away.

"Now, son of a disease, throw this refuse into the pit. And you, Landon, strip this fellow you kicked senseless. I need his clothes."

The survivor complied without a murmur, and one by one thrust the dead and dismembered down the trap-door.

"Tie that pig!" snapped the marquis.

I obeyed, using a coil of the rope with which we had been hoisted up.

"And now," said the marquis, "tell us several things, or I will dismember you slice by slice."

The fellow growled.

"What? Tongue-tied? Well, then . . . but no, I will not slice you to pieces——

"Landon, pass me that torch."

I plucked the flaming torch from its socket in the wall. Etienne applied it to the Kurd's feet.

"Where is the girl, and what is the master doing?"

The Kurd writhed, and groaned.

"Speak up, dungheap, or I'll roast you alive!"

The smell of flesh roasted before it is dead is not pleasant.

"I will speak, *sahib!*"

"Very well. What is happening in the Throne Room, and what of the girl?"

"The master sits on the high throne. The girl is as one dead, awaiting the command to pass through the veils of fire to become the Bride of the Peacock. It is the night of power."

"The night of power . . . and here we are, two against a company. Landon, will you join me in dying like a man?"

"I don't relish this dying stuff any too damned much, Etienne," I confessed. "But I'll go any reasonable length with you. So lead on."

"Magnifique! Let us go——"

And then he turned.

"This roasted pig here will spread no alarm," he growled as his blade descended.

We thrust this last body down the trap-door.

THE marquis wiped his simitar, and led the way. Torches illuminated the passage until the first turn, and thereafter it was lighted by an indirect glow, emanating from a molding along the arched ceiling.

"Your Arabic is acceptable. A lot of these fellows speak only Kurdish or dialects of Turki, but stick to your own, and all will be well. And very few will recognize me in that purple light. None, in fact. They've not seen me for better than two years, and my very existence has been forgotten except by a few jailers."

"There was one who evidently had not forgotten you."

I felt for the little peacock amulet, and found it still about my throat.

"Nureddin was speechless. Handed it to me, and coughed his life out. Since he was your friend, take it."

"Another vengeance to exact. But remember: on your life speak not the Arabic word for Satan. Whoever inadvertently pronounces it must then and there be torn to pieces. Nor say any word resembling it. That would be fatal to you, and would draw attention to me."

"What is your plan?"

"I have none. Even as I had none but an urge to explore when I wandered into the darkness and found you. This labyrinth is not entirely known to me, Keeper of the Sanctuary before Abdul Malaak. But this part of it I know well enough, and our wits will do the rest."

The marquis led the way, down winding passages, up stairways, down others, curving and twisting, never once hesitating at a branch or cross passage. Sentries posted at intersections saluted us perfunctorily; and the marquis negligently returned their salutes.

As we advanced, I picked up the deep booming of the drums. Mingled with it was the wail of reed pipes, and the whines of single-stringed *kemenjahs*.

"Fight it," said the marquis. "Don't let it get a hold on you. Abdul Malaak sits nodding there on that tall throne, impressing his will on the circle of adepts. They receive and amplify it a thousandfold, and on that a thousandfold more, increasing in geometrical progression. They have but to attune their minds to the vibration frequency."

"Once I saw them project their thought to take material form."

"Jugglery!" he scoffed.

"Jugglery if you will. But I saw what I saw: a material entity formed in the vortex of that resonating, countlessly amplified thought."

"But," continued the marquis, "if you resist it from the beginning, you may hold your own. We may break it up. Tonight's conclave deals with Diane, and thus our escape may not be noted."

As we turned a corner, crossed simitars barred our progress.

Etienne made a curious, fleeting gesture with his left hand.

The sentries raised their blades in salute and advanced us. As we entered the arched doorway of the Throne Room, their blades clicked behind us.

A SMOLDERING, somber mist, red as the embers of a plundered city, hung in the air of that great domed hall. A heavy sweetness surged about us, wave on wave. Bearded adepts sat cross-legged beneath three-decked, gilded parasols, and caressed with knuckles and finger tips and the heels of their hands the drums of varying sizes which they balanced on their knees. As they played, they swayed in cadence. Their eyes stared fixedly to the front. They were dead men driven by a terrific will.

Against the wall of the circular hall towered a pyramid terraced in steps of glistening black. Tongues of flame quivered up from orifices along the stairway that led to the dais at the apex. The dais was canopied with gold-threaded damask, and crowned with the monstrous effigy of a peacock, tail fanned out, and enameled in natural colors.

On the dais sat the cadaverous Abdul Malaak, that animated mummy that was to smite all France with the devastating thought waves of his adepts. He sat there like a high god. He nodded to the colossal thunder of the drums, and the whining strings, and the wind instruments that moaned of the blacknesses across the Border.

We took our places near the foot of the pyramid, so that we could see the en-

trance which faced Abdul Malaak. Through it filed a steady stream of devotees, all robed in white, with scarlet girdles from which hung simitars. As they took their places on the cinnabar-powdered floor, they caught the cadence of the music and swayed to its rhythm. From their ranks, row after row in a crescent facing the throne, came a hoarse whispering which grew to a solemn chant.

Acolytes marched up and down through the ranks of the communicants, swinging fuming censers. Others, robed in crimson, followed them, bearing copper trays laden with small, curiously shaped lozenges and wafers which they offered the followers of the Peacock.

The stones beneath us quivered. I could feel the world rocking on its foundations. That maddening music finally spoke in a wordless language of riot and pillage and chaos. And high above the adepts, arms crossed on his breast, sat Abdul Malaak, directing the doom.

I thought of the violin note that would shiver a wine-glass; of the ram's-horn trumpets that leveled the walls of Jericho. It wasn't the sound. It was the *thought* that was in resonance, the mind of each individual hammering relentlessly in cadence, doubling and redoubling the sum whenever another of the circle put himself completely in tune. Resonance; perfect timing; until the hatred of one shriveled adept from High Asia would be magnified a millionfold and on that yet again as much more.

The air was tenanted with presences called from over the Border by that demon on his tall black terraced throne. Distinctly above that deep, world-shaking roll and thunder I began to hear twitterings and chirpings and murmurings. *They* were gathering, drawn by the master's resistless vortex of power. We were being hemmed in by a congress of evil infinitely greater than all humanity working with one thought could of itself devise. The puny blasphemies and petty filthinesses of mediæval devil-worship were childish against this monumental array of satanism from Kurdistan.

"Fight it, Landon, fight it!" whispered the marquis. "Don't let it get you, or you'll join them. Malik Tawus devised no such evil; not in Kurdistan and Armenia, where I learned the true faith to bring it to France."

An acolyte approached with a tray of wafers. The marquis and I both accepted.

"On your life, don't swallow it," he cautioned. "Palm it. With that music you couldn't stand the drug it contains.

"And to think that I brought all this into France," he continued. "Not *this,* tonight, but paved the way for that devil up there to get this hold. His death is more important than your life, or mine, or hers, even.

"If Nureddin were alive. . . ."

And then, "Look!" exclaimed Etienne. "Over there!"

Diane, arrayed in wisps of scarlet and silver, and crowned with a strange, tall head-dress that flamed and smoldered with rubies and frosty diamonds, and glowed with great pearls lurid in that sultry light, was escorted by acolytes toward the steps of the pyramid.

Tongues of flame now spurted waist-high along the dais and encircled it; and the jets of flame rose taller along the steps.

Pace by pace Diane approached the steep ascent of the pyramid.

"She is to pass through the veil of fire and become the Bride of the Peacock," whispered Etienne. "The flames will not hurt her body, but she will be enslaved beyond all redemption."

"Maybe we can make a fast break and charge up the steps and finish Abdul Malaak before these fellows come out of their trance," I suggested. "Do you know of

any way of getting away after we've done that?"

"Yes. A door behind the throne opens into the *solitarium* where he sits, most of the time, in meditation on his pedestal."

"Well, then. . . ."

"The flames won't hurt her body," resumed the marquis. "But if one of us starts up there, all he has to do is to press a small catch, and the nature of the flame will change entirely. There are those who have passed through the veil unbidden, but they didn't live long."

Diane had begun the ascent.

Then Abdul Malaak spoke in a great voice, incongruously deep for that emaciated frame.

"Servants of Malik Tawus, I have summoned you to witness the Night of Power. Thus far we have failed because your lips served me while your hearts betrayed me. Some of you still think of *El Marqees* who would not honor me and the message I carried from across the border.

"Others think of Nureddin, who would have kept you in Kurdistan, oppressed by the Moslem, and worshipping the Bright Angel as fugitives hidden in caverns.

"But Nureddin was slain in the act of betraying us to the *Feringhi* so that he could liberate *El Marqees.* But I have devised a doom for *El Marqees;* I, Abdul Malaak, have thwarted his power, and behold, she is seeking me instead of him. Behold, and believe, and give him freely to his doom, even as his comrade in treason was doomed."

"We see and we believe, and we give freely!" came the deep response.

Etienne clutched my arm.

"There is but one chance. I will go first, and settle with Abdul Malaak, and extinguish the flames. You follow, and when the flames subside, take Diane through the door behind the throne."

Etienne leaped to his feet, and three steps up the terrace.

I followed him, drawing my blade.

A MURMUR rose from the devotees. Abdul Malaak stared, for once disconcerted. Then he shouted a command. The swordsmen stirred in their trance. Abdul Malaak smote a brazen gong at the side of the dais. Its deep clang touched them to life. They rose. Blades flashed.

Two against that host of madmen. Pierre had failed me. And I was glad that he had failed. Why should he also die in this butchery?

Abdul Malaak leaned forward in his throne. His fingers found and touched a knob: and the flames rose high about the dais, fierce, consuming fire.

"Hold them until I get Abdul Malaak. Then take her away while I cover your retreat!" shouted Etienne as he passed Diane on the stairs.

He leaped through that deadly, blinding flame and at Abdul Malaak on his throne.

Then came a voice loud and clear above the roar of the swordsmen: "Nureddin has returned! Nureddin with the assassin's knife in his chest!"

I turned, just two leaps from the flame-girt dais, where I had overtaken Diane and caught her in my free arm.

And Nureddin it was, drooping mustaches, scar-seamed cheek and forehead: a Kurd from Kurdistan. He flung aside his robe. A jeweled hilt gleamed from his chest: the very dagger I had seen impale him in Pierre's study!

"Who will exact blood indemnity for the death of Nureddin?"

He strode through the milling throng that parted wide for him.

"What? Must I rise from the dead to exact the *diyat?* O dogs and sons of dogs, have you forgotten the bread and salt of Nureddin?"

And the wave of steel that was to overtake and overwhelm us subsided. There was an instant of silence. Then at the feet of the terrace the apparition halted, faced about, clutched at his chest, and wrenched the dagger free.

There came a low murmur from the crowd.

Nureddin hurled the dagger among the dazed swordsmen.

"Take it and avenge Nureddin!"

"*Ya* Nureddin!" shouted one.

"He is our father and grandfather!"

"Nureddin has come from the dead!"

"Fraud and trickery!" shouted another.

"That's no dead man!"

"Kill the impostor!"

"It's Nureddin himself!"

The adherents of Nureddin were forming in a cluster. A simitar rose and flashed swiftly down. Another, and another. The friends of Nureddin, shoulder to shoulder, were cutting their way into the company. Their number was growing every instant; but still they were outnumbered ten to one.

Nureddin was ascending the terrace, three steps at a time. He halted where I stood, simitar in my sword hand, and my free arm supporting Diane.

The battle at the foot of the terrace was waxing hotter every moment. The friends of Nureddin were being forced back toward the wall. A dozen or twenty of the enemy were charging up the terrace to cut down the impostor, and me also.

Nureddin thrust at me a pair of Boukhara saddle-bags.

I dropped my blade, and took them.

Each of his hands emerged with an object a little larger than a goose egg. Then he tossed them, one with each hand: grenades! They burst full among the enemy, halting the charge with their deadly, flaming phosphorus. Another grenade. And yet another. The assault broke and fled, howling and aflame.

And then Nureddin rained his grenades into the mob below.

Even in this damned place of madness, I knew now that this was no dead man.

"We're out of fire!" he growled in guttural Arabic. "Some high explosive!"

And that fierce Kurd, withdrawing the safety pins and holding the grenades to the last split second, hurled them so that they burst as they landed, rending and blasting the enemy.

The friends of Nureddin were now advancing, slaying-mad and frenzied by the fire and explosive that dead Nureddin had hurled at the enemy.

"*Ya* Nureddin!" they shouted. "Nureddin has returned with the fires of Jehannum! *Ya* Nureddin!"

I glanced at the throne. The terrific, searing heat had subsided, and flames were scarcely ankle-high. Etienne was clambering to his feet. He reeled, and tottered. Blood streamed from his mouth. His smile was terrible.

Then he stooped, picked an armful from the throne, and advanced down the terrace toward us.

"I told you I'd do it. Sorry you couldn't watch and take your lesson." He laughed as he wiped his lips. "Look!"

I saw from the torn throat of his burden that he had made good his boast.

Then Etienne with a supreme effort pitched the remains of Aboul Malaak headlong into the bedlam below.

The Kurd was hurling his last grenade.

One last detonation, muffled by the bodies it blasted and seared.

"Etienne," I demanded, "before we get into that butchery, release her so that her mind will be free."

"*Très bien!*"

He turned to Diane, stroked her cheeks, whispered in her ear, shook her

sharply, whispered again, tapped her here and there with his knuckles.

Her scream was piercingly natural and feminine. Diane the automaton had become a woman again.

"Oh, Etienne, I did find you! You weren't dead after all——"

"Found me, but not for long. Follow Landon out of here. Quick! I'm a dead man. Breathed too much of that flame. I'm following Nureddin."

He kissed her and broke away from her arms.

"Well, if you're following Nureddin, you're going in the wrong direction," said a calm voice at our side, not in guttural Arabic, but in French. "And here's your pistol, Landon."

Nureddin, nothing! Pierre d'Artois!

"Stand fast, fool!" he shouted, seizing Etienne's shoulder. "Nureddin's friends are winning. And dead Nureddin is avenged."

"Then," retorted Etienne, as he recognized Pierre, "take Diane out of here. This time I won't return to haunt her."

Etienne saluted us with his blade.

"Swear not to follow me! The last will of the dead. I don't want to waste what little life is left——"

Pierre stared at him for a moment, and saw that Etienne spoke the truth.

"You have my word."

Pierre's blade rose in salute; and then he turned to the throne.

"Oh, Etienne!" cried Diane, at that moment realizing his intentions.

But Etienne did not hear her.

As I followed Pierre, I glanced over her shoulder and saw Etienne, blade flaming in a great arc, charge headlong into the mêlée. His simitar rose and fell, shearing and slashing. His voice rang exultant with slaughter. Then we heard his voice no more.

I half carried, half dragged Diane through the panel behind the throne, into the *solitarium* of Abdul Malaak, and thence, finally, through the winding passages to Diane's apartment.

"TELL me," I demanded of d'Artois the next day, "why you ordered me to follow Diane into that den of madness?"

"That was an error which I didn't recognize until after it was all over," admitted Pierre. "But since you acquitted yourself as you did, I claim a free pardon for having unwittingly sent you to face the Keeper of the Sanctuary instead of going myself.

"I had what you call the hunch," he continued. "It came to me in a flash that my idea of impersonating Nureddin would succeed. You understand, I had toyed with the notion from the day of his death. I knew that Nureddin would have enough of a following to divide the conclave if he suddenly appeared, risen from the grave.

"The disguise was easy. My nose is about right by nature. Those scars on the cheek and forehead, and the mustaches, and the eyebrows were simple. Just a few touches, and the essentials were there. And that dagger—well, that was one of those flexible-bladed weapons used on the stage, in sword-swallowing acts. But convincing, *hein?*"

Pierre grinned gleefully, and continued, "Finding my way into that den was not so difficult. Nureddin before his death mentioned Porte d'Espagne. I checked against Vauban's plans, and then made soundings with instruments such as prospectors use in your country to locate those oil domes. My men—you saw them, and remarked, that afternoon as we drove by—found considerable subterranean cavities where the plans showed none.

"And since I knew enough of the rit-

ual of Malik Tawus, my detection as an impostor was very improbable."

"But what set you on the trail, originally?" I asked.

"Etienne's letter," replied Pierre. "I knew it for a forgery the moment I noticed that it had been written by some one who, being used to Arabic, which is written from *right* to *left*, forgot in his careful forging that Etienne would cross his t's from *left* to *right*.

"*Alors*, that sufficed. Then I telephoned Paris headquarters, where they have a file of every newspaper in the world. There was no such article in any paper printed in Morocco as the one Diane gave me.

"Thus I knew that some one was using Etienne's alleged death as a means of getting Diane into Etienne's house, where memories of him would make her an easy victim to the psychic influences that were directed toward her.

"And according to his remarks before you two escaped from his cell, the marquis had also been seeking to project a thought to her. And between the two forces——"

"Just a moment," I interrupted. "Why did Abdul Malaak go to all the trouble of projecting his thought to Diane when a couple of his men could have seized and dragged her down there? Why bother to prepare the stage setting of Etienne's death? Just oriental indirectness?"

"Not at all! Don't you see," explained Pierre, "that they wanted not merely Diane in person; they wanted her as a slave of the will of Abdul Malaak. And when she had succumbed to his will sufficiently to begin her nocturnal wanderings and pick her way to the door, he would know that she was truly in his power, and ready for the next step, becoming an automaton whose activities as a spy could be controlled no matter where she went.

"But, *grâce à Dieu*—with certain credit to Pierre d'Artois—Mademoiselle Diane's mind is freed, not only by the death of Etienne and Abdul Malaak, but also by having obeyed the command which had been impressed so firmly on her subconscious mind.

"And therefore, *mon vieux*," he continued, "since she is done for ever with opening graves in her sleep, you must during the remainder of your stay in Bayonne divert her mind from those gruesome memories. So out of my sight for the evening. I have work to attend to. *Allez!*" And thus on that, and on other evenings, I sought Diane with more confidence than I had any right to have. . . .

"SOMEHOW," said Diane one night as we sat on the tall gray wall of Lachepaillet, watching the moon-silvered mists rise from the moat and roll into the park, far below, "that moment's meeting with Etienne was so unreal. It was as if he'd appeared from the dead to put my mind at rest rather than that he was actually alive. In a way, he died two years ago, instead of on that mad, terrible night . . . not a fresh grief, but the calming of an old sorrow . . . if you know what I mean——"

And then and there, as Pierre would put it, I had the hunch.

"You mean," said I, "that the Bride of the Peacock could be pleased with a much less colorful bird?"

Which was precisely what Diane had in mind.

The Lair of the Star-Spawn

By AUGUST W. DERLETH and MARK SCHORER

The story of a dread menace to mankind on the long-lost Plateau of Sung

(The extraordinary paper, now for the first time published below, was found among the private documents of the late Eric Marsh, whose death followed so suddenly upon his return from that mysterious expedition into Burma, from which only he returned alive almost three decades ago.)

I

IF THERE ever be a reader to this, my first and only word on that matter which has robbed me of all hope of security in this world, I ask him only to read what I have written, and then, if he is incredulous, to go himself to that mountainous expanse of Burma, deep in its most secret places, and see there the wreck of the greenstone city in the center of the Lake of Dread on the long-lost Plateau of Sung. And if he is not yet satisfied, to go to the village of Bangka in the province of Shan-si and ask for the philosopher and scientist, Doctor Fo-Lan, once far-famed among the scholars of the world and now lost to them of his own volition. Doctor Fo-Lan may tell what I will not. For I write in the hope of forgetting; I want to put away from me for all time the things that I chronicle in this document.

Well within the memory of my generation, the Hawks Expedition set out for the little-explored secret fastnesses of Burma. In all the newspapers of the world was announced, not three months after the setting-out from New York, the tragic end of that expedition. In the files of any newspaper may be found the story of how the expedition was attacked by what were apparently bandits, and killed to the last man, mercilessly and brutally, the party looted, and the bodies left exposed to the hot, unwavering rays of the Burma sun. In most chronicles, there were two additional details—the first telling of the discovery of the body of a native guide about a mile or more from the scene of the ghastly slaughter, and the second of the utter disappearance of Eric Marsh, student and assistant to Geoffrey Hawks, famed explorer and scholar, whose life was lost in the unfortunate Burmese expedition.

I am Eric Marsh. My return was chronicled almost a month later, less sensationally, for which I am grateful. Yet, while these papers state the manner in which I found my way once more into civilization, they laugh at me a little when they say I will not talk, and condole with me a little less when they say that my mind is no longer sound. Perhaps my mind has been affected; I can no longer judge.

It is with the events of that period between the murderous attack on the Hawks Expedition and my own return to the known world with which this document is concerned. Of the beginning, I need tell little. For the very curious, there are the easily obtained periodical accounts.

Let me only say at the outset that our attackers were not bandits. On the contrary, they were a horde of little men, the tallest of them no more than four feet, with singularly small eyes set deep in dome-like, hairless heads. These queer attackers fell upon the party and had killed men and animals with their bright swords almost before our men could extract their weapons.

My own escape occurred only through the merest chance. It had so happened that my superior, Hawks, had somehow lost his compass case, which he always carried at his side. We had been travelling no more than two hours that morning, and he knew that the case had been at his belt when we started. Some one had to go back, for the compasses were indispensable to us. We looked to one of the natives to return quickly along the trail, but to our surprize every native we had with us refused point-blank to return alone. A strange uneasiness had been current among them for all of the last day, ever since we had come within sight of the range of high hills where lay the so-called lost Plateau of Sung. It is true that strange legends had reached us even before we had left Ho-Nan province of a weird race of little people, to whom the natives applied the odd name, "Tcho-Tcho," supposedly living near or on the Plateau of Sung. Indeed, it had been our

"I am Doctor Fo-Lan!" he said.

intention to pry into these legends if possible, despite the reticence and obvious fear of the natives, who looked upon the lost plateau as a place of evil.

Annoyed at this delay, and yet desirous of pushing on, Hawks was not favorable toward the plan that we all return, and in the end I volunteered to cover the distance myself while the party went on more slowly until my return. I found the case of compasses without trouble lying in the center of our trail only five miles back, and veered my mount to rejoin the party. A mile away, I heard their screams, and the few shots they were enabled to fire. At the moment I was screened from view of the party by a low mound on which grew short bushes. I stopped the horse and dropped to the ground. I crawled slowly up the slope and looked across the flat land beyond to where the party was being massacred. Through my glasses I saw that the attackers outnumbered the party by at least four to one, that they had had a great advantage, for they had evidently attacked just as the party was stringing out to enter a defile at the base of the range of high hills beyond. I realized at once that I could do nothing to help. Consequently I remained hidden until the strange little men had vanished; then I rode cautiously forward to the scene of the carnage.

I found there only dead bodies; no living thing had been left behind. The cavalcade, I discovered at once, had been plundered, but fortunately for me, the marauders had taken neither food nor water, contenting themselves, curiously enough, with our plans and implements. Thus I was without even a shovel with which I might have given my companions something like a burial.

There was nothing left for me to do but to return to civilization; I could not go on alone. Consequently I took as many canteens of water and packets of food as I could carry on my horse, and started away.

I had one of two routes of return open to me: either I could go back the way we had come, and risk death on the long journey over uninhabited land, or I could forge ahead and cross the plateau and the high hills; for I knew that uninhabited land lay immediately beyond the range before me. The distance beyond the range was less than half that which I would have to recover, were I to retrace the party's course. Yet it was an unknown route, and there was danger of again encountering the little people whose ruthlessness I had witnessed. The factor that finally decided me was the still flowering hope that I might by some accident stumble upon the ruins of the forgotten city of Alaozar, which century-old legends traced to the plateau before me. Accordingly, I went ahead.

I had not gone far, following as best I could the direction the compass indicated, when I heard a low call a little to my left. I pulled up my horse to listen. It came again, half call, half moan. Dismounting, I walked to the spot, and there I found the native whom the journals have mentioned as having made his way from the scene of the massacre. He was badly wounded in the abdomen by the same blades that had killed my companions, and he was obviously near death. I knelt beside him and raised his agonized body in my arms.

His eyes flashed recognition, and he stared up into my face as memory returned to him, and unutterable horror crossed his features. "Tcho-Tcho," he muttered. "Little men—from Lake of Dread . . . walled city."

I felt his body go limp in my arms, and, looking into his face, I thought him dead. I took his wrist in my hand and felt no pulse. Laying him carefully on the

ground, I started away from him. As I walked through the low underbrush, a call much weaker than the first caused me to turn abruptly. The native was still lying on the ground, but his head was slightly raised with what must have been a tremendous effort, and one arm pointed weakly in the direction of the hills ahead.

"Not there!" he rasped, "Not . . . to . . . hills." Then he fell back, shuddering, and lay still.

For a moment I was disconcerted, but I could not afford to ponder his warning. I went on, toiling all afternoon up that ever-steepening slope before me, through almost impassable defiles and up sheer walls. Occasional trees, low, stunted growths, grew from the brush and wasteland, but these impeded my progress not at all.

When I reached the crest of the range, the sun was setting. Looking into the red blaze that tinted the desolate expanse before me, the monotonous, uninhabited waste of unknown Burma, my mind reverted to the fate of my companions and my own plight. Grief mingled with fear of the oncoming night. But suddenly I started. Was it the sun in my eyes that created the strange sight which grew out of the wasteland far ahead on the Plateau of Sung? But as I continued to stare ahead, the moving red before my eyes dimmed away, and I knew that what I saw existed, was no illusion, no fantasm. Far away across the plateau on whose very edge I stood rose a grove of tall trees, and beyond the trees, yet set in their midst, I saw the walls and parapets of a city, red in the glare of the dying sun, rising alone in the plateau like a single monument in a burial ground. I hardly dared believe what my mind thrust forward, yet there was no alternative—before me lay the long-lost city of Alaozar, the shunned dead city which for centuries had figured in the tales and legends of frightened natives!

Whether the city stood on an island and was surrounded by water—the Lake of Dread—as natives also believed, I could not tell, for it was at least five miles away, at a spot which I estimated should be the center of the Plateau of Sung. In the morning I would venture there, and go alone into the city deserted for centuries by men. The sun threw its last long rays over the waste expanse even as I looked toward the fabled city of Burma, and the shadows of dusk crept upon the plateau. The city faded from sight.

I HOBBLED my horse in a near-by spot where a reddish-brown grass grew, gave it as much of the water as I could spare, and prepared for the night. I did not sit long in the glow of my fire, for I was tired after my long climb, and sleep would wipe away or make less real the memory of my dead friends and the haunting fear of danger. But when I lay down under the star-filled sky, I fell asleep not amid dreams of those dead, but of others —those who had gone from Alaozar, the shunned and unknown.

How long I slept I can not say. I awoke suddenly, almost at once alert, feeling that I was no longer alone. My horse was whinnying uncannily. Then, as my eyes became accustomed to the star-swept darkness, I saw something that brought all my senses to focus. Far ahead of me against the sky I saw a faint white line, flame-like, wavering up, up into the sky toward the distant stars. It was like a living thing, like an electrical discharge, surging always upward. And it came from somewhere on the plateau before me. Abruptly, I sat up. The white line came from the earth far ahead of me, in the spot where I had seen the city in the trees, or close beside it.

Then, as I looked, something happened

to distract my attention from the light. A moving shadow crossed my vision and for an instant blotted out the wavering line ahead. At the same moment my horse neighed suddenly, wildly, and shied away, tearing at the rope which held him. There was some one close to me—man or animal, I could not tell.

Even as I started to rise to my feet something struck me a crushing blow on the back of my head. The last thing I knew was a faint, far-away knowledge that around me there was suddenly the sound of many little feet pattering, pressing close to me. Then I sank into blackness.

2

I AWOKE in a bed.

When last I had lain down to sleep on the Plateau of Sung, I know I had been over a day's journey from even the roughest native mats; yet I awoke in a bed, and instinctively I knew that only a comparatively short time had passed since the mysterious attack made on me.

For some moments I lay perfectly still, not knowing what danger might lurk near me. Then I essayed to move about. There was still a sharp pain in my head. I put up my hand to feel the wound I felt sure must be there—and encountered a bandage! My exploring fingers told me that it was not only a skilful bandage but also a thoroughly done job. Yet I could not have been taken out of the secret fastnesses of Burma in such a short time, could not have been moved to civilization!

But my ruminations were cut short, for abruptly a door opened into the room, and a light entered. I say a light entered, for that is exactly the impression I got. It was an ordinary lamp, and it seemed to float along without human guidance. But as it came closer, I saw that it was held aloft by a very little man, certainly of that same company which had only so recently slain the men and animals of the Hawks Expedition! The creature advanced solemnly and put the lamp, which gave off a weird green light, on a stone table near the bed in which I lay. Then I saw something else.

In my amazement, I had failed to notice the man who walked behind the creature carrying the lamp. Now, when the little man bowed suddenly in his direction, and scurried away, closing the door of the room behind him, I saw what in proportion to my first visitor seemed a giant. Yet the man was in reality only slightly over six feet in height.

He stood at the side of my bed, looking down at me in the glow of the green lamp. He was a Chinaman, already well past middle age. His green-white face seemed to leap out from the black of his gown, and his white hands with their long, delicate fingers seemed to hang in black space. On his head he wore a black skull-cap, from beneath the rim of which projected a few straggling white hairs.

For a few moments he stood looking down at me in silence. Then he spoke, and to my astonishment, addressed me in flawless English.

"How do you feel now, Eric Marsh?"

The voice was soft, sibilant, pleasant. The man, I felt, was a doctor; I looked at him more intently, seeking to draw him closer. There was something alarmingly familiar about his face.

"I feel better," I said. "There is still slight pain." The man offered no comment, and I went on, after a brief pause. "Can you tell me where I am? How you know my name?"

My strange visitor closed his eyes reflectively for a moment; then again came his soft voice. "Your baggage is here; it identifies you." He paused. Then he said, "As to where you are, perhaps if I told you, you would not know. You are in the city of Alaozar on the Plateau of Sung."

Yes, that was the explanation. I was in the lost city, and it was not deserted. Perhaps I should have guessed that the strange little people had come from this silent city. I said, "I know." Abruptly, as I looked at the impassive face above me, a memory returned. "Doctor," I said, "you remind me of a certain dead man."

His eyes gazed kindly at me; then he looked away, closing his eyes dreamily. "I had not hoped that any one might remember," he murmured. "Yet . . . of whom do I remind you, Eric Marsh?"

"Of Doctor Fo-Lan, who was murdered at his home in Peiping a few years ago."

He nodded almost imperceptibly. "Doctor Fo-Lan was not murdered, Eric Marsh. His brother was left there in his stead, but he was kidnapped and taken from the world. I am Doctor Fo-Lan."

"These little people," I murmured. "They took you?" I thought for a fleeting instant of his standing among them. "Then you are not their leader!"

The suggestion of a smile haunted Fo-Lan's lips. "Leader," he repeated. "No, I am their servant. I serve the Tcho-Tcho people in one of the most diabolic schemes ever formulated on the face of the earth!"

The astonished questions that came to my lips were abruptly quieted by the silent opening of the door, and the entrance of two of the Tcho-Tcho people. At the same moment, Doctor Fo-Lan said, as if nothing had happened, "You will rest until tonight. Then we will walk about Alaozar; this has been arranged for you."

One of the little people spoke crisply in a language I did not understand; I did however, catch the name "Fo-Lan." The doctor turned without a further word and left the room, and the two Tcho-Tcho people followed him.

Presently the door opened once more, and food and drink were brought me. From that time until Fo-Lan returned at dusk, I was not interrupted again.

THE short walk in the streets of Alaozar which followed fascinated me. Fo-Lan led me first to his apartments, which were not far from the room in which I had spent the day, and there allowed me to look out over the city and to the plateau beyond. I saw at once that the walled city was indeed on an island in the midst of a lake, the surface of which was covered by heavy moving mists, present, I was informed, all day long despite the burning sun. The water, where it could be seen, was green-black, the same strange color of the ancient masonry that made up the city of Alaozar.

Fo-Lan at my side said, "Not without base do ancient legends of China speak of the long-lost city on the Isle of the Stars in the Lake of Dread."

"Why do they call it the Isle of the Stars?" I asked, looking curiously at Fo-Lan.

The doctor's expression was inscrutable. He hesitated before answering, but finally spoke. "Because long before the time of man, strange beings from the stars —from Rigel, Betelgeuze—the stars in Orion, lived here. And some of them— *live here yet!*"

I was nonplussed at the intensity of his voice, and then I did not understand, did not dream of his meaning. "What do you mean?" I asked.

He made a vague gesture with his hands, and with his eyes bade me be cautious. "You were saved from death only so that you might help me," Fo-Lan said. "And I, Eric Marsh, have for years been helping these little people, directing them to penetrate the deep and unknown caverns beneath the Lake of Dread and the surrounding Plateau of Sung where Lloigor and Zhar, ancient evil ones, and their

minions await the day when they can once more sweep over the earth to bring death and destruction and incredible age-old evil!"

I shuddered, and despite its monstrous and unbelievable implications, I felt truth in Fo-Lan's amazing statement. Yet I said, "You do not speak like a scientist, Doctor."

He gave a curt brittle laugh. "No," he replied, "not as you understand a scientist. But what I knew before I came to this place is small in comparison to what I learned here. And the science that men in the outer world know even now is nothing but a child's mental play. Hasn't it sometimes occurred to you that after all we may be the playthings of intelligences so vast that we are unable to conceive them?"

Fo-Lan made a slight gesture of annoyance and silenced the protest on my lips with a sign. Then we began the descent into the streets. Only when I was outside, standing in the narrow streets scarcely wide enough for four men walking abreast, did I realize that Fo-Lan's apartment was in the highest tower in Aloazar, to which, indeed, the other turrets were very small in comparison. There were few high buildings, most of them crouching low on the ground. The city was very small, and took up most of the island, save for a very inconsiderable fringe of land just beyond the ancient walls, on which grew the trees I had seen at sunset the day before, trees which I now noticed were different from any others I had ever seen, having a strange reddish-green foliage and green-black trunks. The sibilant whispering of their curious leaves accompanied us in our short walk, and it was not until we were once more in Fo-Lan's apartment that I remembered there had been no wind of any kind; yet the leaves had moved continually! Then, too, I remarked upon the scarcity of the Tcho-Tcho people.

"There are not many of them," Fo-Lan said, "but they are powerful in their own way. Yet there are curious lapses in their intelligence. Yesterday, for instance, after spying your party from the top of this tower, and after going out and annihilating it, they returned with two of their number dead; they had been shot. The Tcho-Tcho people could not believe them dead, since it is impossible for them to conceive of such a weapon as a gun. At base, they are a very simple people; yet they are inherently malevolent, for they know that they are working for the destruction of all that is good in the world."

"I do not quite understand," I said.

"I can feel that you do not believe in this monstrous fable," Fo-Lan replied. "How can I explain it to you; you are bound by conventions long established? Yet I will try. Perhaps you wish to think that it is all a legend; but I will offer you tangible proof that there is more than legend here.

"EONS ago, a strange race of elder beings lived on Earth; they came from Rigel and Betelgeuze to take up their abode here and upon other planets. But they were followed by those who had been their slaves on the stars, those who had set up opposition to the Elder Ones—the evil followers of Cthulhu, Hastur the Unspeakable, Lloigor and Zhar, the twin Obscenities, and others. The Ancient Ones fought these evil beings for possession of the earth, and after many centuries, they conquered. Hastur fled into outer space, but Cthulhu was banished to the lost sea kingdom of R'lyeh, while Lloigor and Zhar were buried alive deep in the inner fastnesses of Asia—beneath the accursed Plateau of Sung!

"Then the Old Ones, the Elder Gods, returned to the stars of Orion, leaving be-

hind them ever-damned Cthulhu, Lloigor, Zhar, and others. But the evil ones left seeds on the plateau, on the island in the Lake of Dread which the Old Ones caused to be put there. And from these seeds have sprung the Tcho-Tcho people, the spawn of elder evil, and now these people await the day when Lloigor and Zhar will rise again and sweep over all the earth!"

I had to summon all my restraint to keep from shrieking my disbelief aloud. After some hesitation I forced myself to say in as calm a voice as I could assume, "What you have told me is impossible, Fo-Lan."

Fo-Lan smiled wearily. He moved closer to me, put his hand gently on my arm, and said, "Have they never taught you, Eric Marsh, that there lives no man who may say what is possible and what not? What I have told you is true; it is impossible only because you are incapable of thinking of this earth in any terms but those suggested by the little science the outer world knows."

I felt myself rebuked. "And I must help you raise these dead things, penetrate the subterranean caverns below Alaozar and bring up the creatures that lie there to destroy the earth?" I asked incredulously.

Fo-Lan looked at me impassively. Then his voice sank to a whisper, and he said, "Yes . . . and no. The Tcho-Tcho people believe you will help me to raise them, and so they must continue to believe; but you and I, Eric Marsh . . . you and I are going to destroy the things below!"

I was bewildered. For a moment I entertained the idea that my companion was mad. "Two of us—against a host of creatures and the Tcho-Tcho people—and our only weapon my gun, wherever that is?"

Fo-Lan shook his head. "You anticipate me. You and I will be but the instruments; through us the things below will die."

"You are speaking in riddles, Doctor," I said.

"Nightly for many months I have tried to call for help with the force of my mind, have tried to get through the cosmos to those who alone can help in the titanic struggle before us. Last night I found a way, and soon I myself will go forth and demand the assistance we need."

"Still I do not understand," I said.

Fo-Lan closed his eyes for a moment. Then he said, "You do not want to understand me, or you are afraid to. I am suggesting that by telepathy I will summon help from those who first fought the things imprisoned below us."

"There exists no proof of telepathy, Doctor."

It was a foolish thing to say, as Fo-Lan immediately pointed out to me. He smiled, a little scornfully. "Try to throw off your shackles, Eric Marsh. You come to a place you did not know existed, and you see things which are to you impossible; yet you seek to deny something so close and conceivable as telepathy."

"I'm sorry," I said. "I'm afraid I'm not going to be much of a help to you. How am I to help you? And how will you go forth?"

"You are to watch over my body when I travel upward to seek the help of those above."

Dimly, intelligence began to come to me. "Last night," I murmured, "out there on the plateau, I saw a white line wavering into the sky."

Fo-Lan nodded. "That was the way," he said, "made visible by the power of my desire. Soon I shall travel it."

I leaned forward eagerly, wanting to ask him a score of questions. But Fo-Lan held up his hand for silence. "Have you

heard nothing, Eric Marsh?" he said. "All this while it has been growing."

The moment Fo-Lan mentioned it, I realized that I had heard something, had been hearing it ever since we had re-entered the doctor's apartment. It was a low humming, a disturbing sound as of a chant, which seemed to well up from far below, and yet seemed equally present from all sides. And at the same time I was conscious of a distinct atmospheric change, something which Fo-Lan did not perhaps notice, since he had been here now for years. It was a growing tension, a pressing, feverish tension in the chill night air. Slowly there grew in me a feeling of great fear; the very air, I felt, was noxious with cosmic evil.

"What is it?" I murmured.

Fo-Lan did not answer. He appeared to be listening intently to the chant or humming sound mounting from below, smiling to himself. Then he looked cryptically at me and abruptly stepped to the outer wall. There he pulled hard at one of the ancient stones in the wall, and in a moment, a large section of the wall swung slowly inward, revealing a dark passage beyond, a secret way leading downward. Fo-Lan came swiftly back toward me, taking up one of the little green lamps with which I had once before come in contact, and lighting it as he spoke to me.

"I have not been idle in these past years. I fashioned that way myself, and only I know of it. Come, Eric Marsh; I will show you what no Tcho-Tcho suspects I have ever seen, what will silence all protest or disbelief in you."

THE stairs which I found myself descending in a few moments led downward along the round wall of a shaft that pierced the earth. Down, down we went, feeling the walls on both sides of us with our hands. Fo-Lan carried the lamp in one hand, and its greenish glow served as illumination for our perilous journey, for the steps were uneven and steep. As we descended, the sounds from below grew noticeably louder. Now the humming sound was frequently cut into by another, the sound of many voices murmuring together in some long-forgotten language.

Then, abruptly, Fo-Lan stopped. He gave the lamp to me, and with a brief caution to me not to speak, gave his attention to the wall before him. Raising the lamp above my head, I saw that the stone steps went no farther, that we were, in fact, within two feet of solid masonry. Suddenly Fo-Lan reached back and extinguished the light, and at the same time I was conscious of an opening in the wall before us, where Fo-Lan had moved aside an old stone. "Look down, and with care," he whispered. Then he stepped aside, and I peered downward.

I looked into a gigantic cavern, illuminated by a huge green lamp seemingly suspended in space, and by at least a hundred smaller ones. The first thing that caught my eye was the horde of Tcho-Tcho people prostrate on the floor; it was from them that the low murmuring sound was coming. Then I saw an upright figure among them. It was that of a Tcho-Tcho man, slightly taller than the others, I thought, disfigured by a hump on his back, and incredibly old. He was stalking slowly forward, supported by a crooked black stick. Behind me, Fo-Lan, noticing the direction of my glance, murmured, "That is E-poh, leader of the Tcho-Tcho people; he is seven thousand years old!" I could not help turning in utter surprize. Fo-Lan motioned forward. "You have seen nothing. Look beyond them, beyond E-poh, in the half-darkness forward, but do not cry out."

My gaze swept those prostrate figures, passed beyond E-poh, and began to ex-

plore the dusk beyond. I think I must have been looking for some moments at the thing that crouched there before I actually realized it; that was because the creature was so large. I hesitate to write of it, for I can blame no one for not believing me. Yet it was there. I saw it first because my gaze fixed upon the green gleaming from its eyes. Then, abruptly, I saw it entirely. I thank Providence that the light was not strong, that only its vaguest outlines were clear to me, and I regret only that my innate doubt of Fo-Lan's strange story made the shock of this revelation accordingly sharper.

For the thing that crouched in the weird green dusk was a living mass of shuddering horror, a ghastly mountain of sensate, quivering flesh, whose tentacles, far-flung in the dim reaches of the subterranean cavern, emitted a strange humming sound, while from the depths of the creature's body came a weird and horrific ululation. Then I fell back into Fo-Lan's arms. My mouth opened to cry out, but I felt the doctor's firm hand clapped across my lips, and from a great distance I seemed to hear his voice.

"That is Lloigor!"

3

FO-LAN'S story was true!

I found myself suddenly in Fo-Lan's apartment. I know I must have climbed the long winding steps, but I do not remember climbing them, for the tumultuous thoughts that troubled me and the hideous memory of the thing I had seen served to drive from my mind all consciousness of what I was doing.

Fo-Lan came quickly away from the wall and stood before me, his face triumphant in the green lamplight. "For three years I have helped them penetrate into the earth, into the caverns below, have helped them in their evil purpose; now I shall destroy, and my dead brother will be avenged!" He spoke with an intensity I had not imagined him capable of.

He did not wait for any comment from me. Passing beyond me, he put the lamp down on a small table near the door. Then he went into the bedroom and lit another lamp; I saw its green light on the wall as he came once more into the room where I stood.

"Mind," said Fo-Lan as he stood before me, "is all-powerful. Mind is everything, Eric Marsh. This evening you saw things of which you hesitated to speak, even before you saw the thing in the cavern below—Lloigor. You saw leaves move on trees—and they moved by the power of evil intelligences far below them, deep in the earth—a living proof of the existence of Lloigor and Zhar.

"E-poh has a mind of great power, but the knowledge I have endows me with greater power despite his tremendous age. Long hours I have sought to penetrate cosmic space, and so powerful has my mind become that even you could see the thought-thread that wavered upward from Alaozar last night! And mind, Eric Marsh, exists independent of body.

"I will wait no longer. Tonight I will go forth, now, while the worship is in progress. And you must watch my body."

Colossal as his plan was, I could only believe. What I had seen during the short space of my visit was unbelievable, impossible, yet *was!*

Fo-Lan continued. "My body will rest on the bed in the chamber beyond, but my mind will go where I wish it with a speed incomparable to anything we know. I will think myself on Rigel, and I shall be there. You must watch that none disturbs my body while I am gone. It will not be long."

Fo-Lan drew from his voluminous robe a small pistol, which I recognized immediately as one I had been carrying in

my pack. "You will kill any one who tries to enter, Eric Marsh."

Beckoning me to follow him, Fo-Lan led the way into his chamber, and despite my feeble protest, stretched himself on the bed. Almost at once his body went rigid, and at the same moment I saw a gray outline of Fo-Lan standing before me, a smile on his thin lips, his eyes turned upward. Then he was gone, and I was alone with his body.

For over an hour I sat in Fo-Lan's apartment, my terror mounting with each second. Only in that hour was I capable of approaching in my thoughts the cataclysmic horror which confronted the world if Fo-Lan was unsuccessful in his daring quest. Once, too, while I sat there, pattering footsteps halted beyond the outer door; then, to my unspeakable relief, passed on. Toward the end of my watch, the abrupt cessation of the chanting sounds from below, followed by the noises of movement throughout the island city, indicated that the worship was over. Then for the first time I left the chamber to take up my position at the outer door, where I stood, gun in hand, waiting for the interruptions my terrified mind told me must come.

But I never had cause to use the weapon, for suddenly I heard the sound of feet behind me. I whirled—and saw Fo-Lan! He had returned. He stood quietly, listening; then he nodded to himself and said, "We must leave Alaozar, Eric Marsh. Alone, we can not do it, and we have little time to waste. We must see E-poh, and have his permission to go beyond to the Plateau of Sung."

Fo-Lan moved forward now, and tugged at a long rope which hung quite near me along the wall. From somewhere far below there came the abrupt clang of a gong. Once more Fo-Lan pulled the rope, and again the gong sounded.

"That is to inform E-poh that I must speak to him about an urgent matter—concerning the things below."

"And your quest?" I asked. "Has it been successful?"

He smiled wryly. "It will be successful only if I can convince E-poh to open the way for Lloigor and Zhar and their countless hordes tonight—now! The way must be open, otherwise even the Star-Warriors are helpless to penetrate earth."

The sound of running feet in the corridor cut short my questions. The door opened inward and on the threshold I saw two of the Tcho-Tcho people, dressed in long green robes and wearing on their foreheads curious five-pointed star-designs. They ignored me completely, addressing themselves to Fo-Lan. A rapid conversation in their strange language followed, and in a moment the two little people turned to lead the way.

Fo-Lan started after them, motioning me to follow. "From E-poh," he whispered. Then he added in a quick voice, "Be careful and speak no English before E-poh, for he understands it. Also, be certain you still have the gun, for E-poh will not let us go beyond Alaozar without an escort. And those little people you and I will have to kill."

We went rapidly down the corridor, and after a long descent, found ourselves on the street level, and deep in the tower. At last we entered an apartment similar in many respects to Fo-Lan's, but neither so small nor so civilized in its aspect. There we confronted E-poh, surrounded by a group of little people dressed similarly to our guides. Fo-Lan bowed low, and I did the same under the stress of those curious little eyes turned on me.

E-poh was seated on a sort of raised dais, suggestive of his leadership, but beyond the evidence of his great age in his lined face and his withered hands, and the servile attitude of the Tcho-Tcho peo-

ple near him, there was no indication that he was the ruler of the little people around us.

"E-poh," said Fo-Lan, speaking in English for my benefit, "I have had intelligence from those below."

E-poh closed his eyes slowly, saying in a strange whistling voice, "And this intelligence—what is it, Fo-Lan?"

Fo-Lan chose to ignore his question, "Lloigor and Zhar themselves have spoken to my mind!" he said.

E-poh opened his eyes and looked at the doctor in disbelief. "Even to me Zhar has never spoken, Fo-Lan. How can it be that he has spoken to you?"

"Because I have fashioned the way, mine have been the hands that groped below and found Lloigor and those others. Zhar is greater than Lloigor, and of greater age, and his word is law to those below."

"And what has Zhar communicated to you, Fo-Lan?"

"It is written below that tonight is the time when the buried ones wish to come forth, and it is decreed that the servants of E-poh must go beyond Alaozar, beyond the Lake of Dread to the Plateau of Sung, there to await the coming of the Old Ones from below."

E-poh peered intently at Fo-Lan, his perplexity evident. "Tonight I spoke long with Lloigor; it is strange that he told me nothing of this plan, Fo-Lan."

Fo-Lan bowed again. "That is because the decision is Zhar's, and of this Lloigor did not know until now."

"And it is strange that the Old Ones did not address themselves to me."

For a moment Fo-Lan hesitated; then he said, "That is because Zhar wishes me to go beyond Alaozar, to address those below Sung, while E-poh and his people must summon the Gods below from the towers and house-tops of Alaozar. When Lloigor and Zhar have come above the Lake of Dread, then Eric Marsh and I must return to Alaozar, to plan for them the way beyond, into the outer world."

E-poh pondered this statement. In me uneasiness was beginning to grow when at last the Tcho-Tcho leader said, "It will be as you wish, Fo-Lan, but four of my people must go with you and the American."

Fo-Lan bowed. "It is pleasing to me that four others accompany us. But it is necessary also for us to take with us food and water, for there is no way of telling how many hours it may take the Old Ones to rise from below."

E-poh acquiesced without question.

Within a half-hour the six of us found ourselves pushing off the Isle of the Stars into the Lake of Dread, heavily shrouded in thick mists which gave off a strange putrescent odor. The barge-like boat in which we rode was strangely suggestive of ancient Roman galleys, yet very different. The Tcho-Tcho people sculled their way across the lake, and in a few moments we had reached the opposite shore and were pushing rapidly across the Plateau of Sung.

WE HAD not gone far, when from behind us came a weird whistling call, then another and another, and finally a ghastly assembly was piping weirdly from the towers of Alaozar. And from below there came suddenly the terrifying sound of movements under the earth.

"They have opened the vast caverns below the city," murmured Fo-Lan, "and they are calling forth Lloigor and Zhar and those below them."

Then Fo-Lan looked swiftly around, calculating the distance we had covered. Abruptly he turned to me, whispering, "Give me the gun; they will not hear in the city."

Silently I handed the doctor the weapon, and following his sign, backed away.

Sharply the sound of the first shot cut into the night; immediately after, a second shot rang out. Two of our little companions were dead. But the other two, seeing what had happened to their companions, and sensing their own fate, jumped nimbly away, drawing their sharp little two-edged swords. Then, together, they came at Fo-Lan. The revolver spat again, and one of them went down, clawing wildly at the air. But the last of them came on—and the revolver jammed.

Fo-Lan leaped aside at the same instant that I flung myself forward, falling on the Tcho-Tcho man from behind. The force of my attack caused him to drop the weapon he held in his hand, and I thought for a moment that his death was certain. But I had reckoned without his strength. He whirled at once, catching me unaware, and with the greatest ease flung me five feet from him. But this short pause had been sufficient for Fo-Lan; darting forward, he seized the weapon the Tcho-Tcho man had dropped. Then, just as the little man turned, Fo-Lan plunged the weapon into his body. He dropped instantly.

I staggered to my feet, bruised from the shock of being thrown to the ground with such force; I had not imagined that these little men could be so powerful, despite Fo-Lan's early warning. Fo-Lan was standing quite still, an almost ecstatic smile on his face. I looked at him, and opened my lips to speak—and then a movement far behind him caught my eye. At the same instant Fo-Lan turned.

Far up in the sky a brilliant beam of light was growing—and it did not come from the earth! Then suddenly, so swiftly the light grew, the surrounding country was as light as day, and in the sky I saw countless hordes of strange, fiery creatures, apparently mounted on creatures of burden. The riders in the sky were oddly like men in construction, save that from their sides grew three pairs of flailing growths similar to arms, yet not arms, and in these growths they carried curious tube-like weapons. And in size, these beings were monstrous.

"My God!" I exclaimed, when I could find my voice. "What is it, Fo-Lan?"

Fo-Lan's eyes were gleaming in triumph. "They are the Star-Warriors sent by the Ancient Ones from Orion. Up there they listened to my plea, for they know that Lloigor and Zhar and their evil spawn are deathless to man; they know that only the ancient weapons of the Elder Gods can punish and destroy."

I looked once more into the sky. The glowing beings were now much closer, and I saw that the things they rode were limbless—that they were exactly like long tubes, pointed at both ends, travelling evidently only in the power of the ray of light emanating from the stars far above.

"The ululations from beneath the earth have guided them here—and now they will destroy!"

FO-LAN'S voice was drowned out abruptly by the terrific clamor that rose from Alaozar. For the Star-Warriors had surrounded the city, and now from their tube-like appendages shot forth great beams of annihilation and death! And the age-old masonry of Alaozar was crumbling into ruin. Then suddenly the Star-Warriors descended, entering into the city, and penetrating the vast caverns beneath.

And then two things happened. The entire sky began to glow with a weird purple light, and in the ray that descended from above I saw a file of beings even stranger than the Star-Warriors. They were great, writhing pillars of light, moving like tremendous flames, colored purple and white, dazzling in their intensity. These gigantic beings from outer space descended swiftly, circling the Plateau of Sung, and from them great rays of stab-

bing light shot out toward the hidden fastnesses below. And at the same time, the earth began to tremble.

Shuddering, I put out my hand to touch Fo-Lan's arm. He was utterly unmoved, save in triumphant joy at the spectacle of the destruction of Alaozar. "The Ancient Ones themselves have come!" he cried out.

I remember wanting to say something, but I saw suddenly one of those inconceivable pillars of light bending over Fo-Lan and me, and I felt slithering tentacles gently reaching around me; then I knew no more.

There is little more to write. I came to my senses near Bangka, miles from the Plateau of Sung, and at my side was Fo-Lan, unhurt and smiling. We had been transported within the second by the Ancient God who had bent to save us from the destruction of the things beneath the earth.

4

THE statement of Eric Marsh ends thus abruptly. However, what surmises might be made from it, this paper will not state. Mr. Marsh had appended to his curious statement several newspaper clippings, all of them dated within ten days of his appearance at Bangka, where he evidently stayed for a while with Doctor Fo-Lan before returning to America. There is room for only a brief summary of the clippings.

The first was from a Tokyo paper announcing the strange reappearance of Doctor Fo-Lan. Another clipping from the same issue of that paper tells of a curious electrical display witnessed from several observatories in the Orient, seemingly centered in its elemental force somewhere in Burma. Still another paragraph concerns an apparition (thus it is called) supposedly seen in the night during which Doctor Fo-Lan and Eric Marsh so mysteriously returned to Bangka; it was that of a gigantic pillar of light, towering far into the sky, and alive with movement; it was seen by forty-seven persons in and around Bangka.

The final clipping was dated ten days later; it was taken from an eminent London paper, and is the verbatim report of an aviator who flew over Burma in the endeavor to trace the source of a fetid odor which was sweeping the country, nauseating India and China for hundreds of miles around. The heart of this report is briefly:

"The odor I traced to the so-called Plateau of Sung, to which I was attracted by accidental sight of hitherto unknown ruins in the heart of the plateau. I found, to my amazement, that for some reason the earth of the plateau had been broken and torn up for its entire area, save for one spot not far from a deep cavern near the ruins, which bears evidence of once having been a lake. On this spot I managed to effect a landing. I left the machine in order to determine the meaning of the great green-black masses of rotting flesh which greeted my eyes at once. But the odor forced a quick retreat. Yet this I know: the remains on the Plateau of Sung are those of what must have been gigantic animals, apparently boneless, and utterly unknown to man. And they must have met death in battle with mortal enemies!"

The Maker of Gargoyles

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

The story of a mad horror loosed upon a mediaeval village by Blaise Reynard the stone-cutter

AMONG the many gargoyles that frowned or leered from the roof of the new-built cathedral of Vyones, two were pre-eminent above the rest by virtue of their fine workmanship and their supreme grotesquery. These two had been wrought by the stone-carver Blaise Reynard, a native of Vyones, who had lately returned from a long sojourn in the cities of Provence, and had secured employment on the cathedral when the three years' task of its construction and ornamentation was well-nigh completed. In view of the wonderful artistry shown by Reynard, it was regretted by Ambrosius, the archbishop, that it had not been possible to commit the execution of all the gargoyles to this delicate and accomplished workman; but other people, with less liberal tastes than Ambrosius, were heard to express a different opinion.

This opinion, perhaps, was tinged by the personal dislike that had been generally felt toward Reynard in Vyones even from his boyhood; and which had been revived with some virulence on his return. Whether rightly or unjustly, his very physiognomy had always marked him out for public disfavor: he was inordinately dark, with hair and beard of a preternatural bluish-black, and slanting, ill-matched eyes that gave him a sinister and cunning air. His taciturn and saturnine ways were such as a superstitious people would identify with necromantic knowledge or complicity; and there were those who covertly accused him of being in league with Satan; though the accusations were little more than vague, anonymous rumors, even to the end, through lack of veritable evidence.

However, the people who suspected Reynard of diabolic affiliations were wont for awhile to instance the two gargoyles as sufficient proof. No man, they contended, who was not inspired by the Arch-Enemy, could have carven anything so sheerly evil and malignant, could have embodied so consummately in mere stone the living lineaments of the most demoniacal of all the deadly Sins.

The two gargoyles were perched on opposite corners of a high tower of the cathedral. One was a snarling, murderous, cat-headed monster, with retracted lips revealing formidable fangs, and eyes that glared intolerable hatred from beneath ferine brows. This creature had the claws and wings of a griffin, and seemed as if it were poised in readiness to swoop down on the city of Vyones, like a harpy on its prey. Its companion was a horned satyr, with the vans of some great bat such as might roam the nether caverns, with sharp, clenching talons, and a look of Satanically brooding lust, as if it were gloating above the helpless object of its unclean desire. Both figures were complete, even to the hindquarters, and were not mere conventional adjuncts of the roof. One would have expected them to start at any moment from the stone in which they were mortised.

Ambrosius, a lover of art, had been openly delighted with these creations, because of their high technical merit and

"There came a thunderous crash, and the panes of the window were shattered to fragments."

their verisimilitude as works of sculpture. But others, including many humbler dignitaries of the Church, were more or less scandalized, and said that the workman had informed these figures with the visible likeness of his own vices, to the glory of Belial rather than of God, and had thus perpetrated a sort of blasphemy. Of course, they admitted, a certain amount of grotesquery was requisite in gargoyles; but in this case the allowable bounds had been egregiously overpassed.

However, with the completion of the cathedral, and in spite of all this adverse criticism, the high-poised gargoyles of Blaise Reynard, like all other details of the building, were soon taken for granted through mere everyday familiarity; and eventually they were almost forgotten. The scandal of opposition died down, and the stone-carver himself, though the townsfolk continued to eye him askance, was able to secure other work through the favor of discriminating patrons. He remained in Vyones; and paid his addresses, albeit without visible success, to a taverner's daughter, one Nicolette Villom, of whom, it was said, he had long been enamored in his own surly and reticent fashion.

But Reynard himself had not forgotten the gargoyles. Often, in passing the superb pile of the cathedral, he would gaze up at them with a secret satisfaction

whose cause he could hardly have assigned or delimited. They seemed to retain for him a rare and mystical meaning, to signalize an obscure but pleasurable triumph.

He would have said, if asked for the reason of his satisfaction, that he was proud of a skilful piece of handiwork. He would not have said, and perhaps would not even have known, that in one of the gargoyles he had imprisoned all his festering rancor, all his answering spleen and hatred toward the people of Vyones, who had always hated him; and had set the image of this rancor to peer venomously down for ever from a lofty place. And perhaps he would not even have dreamt that in the second gargoyle he had somehow expressed his own dour and satyr-like passion for the girl Nicolette—a passion that had brought him back to the detested city of his youth after years of wandering; a passion singularly tenacious of one object, and differing in this regard from the ordinary lusts of a nature so brutal as Reynard's.

Always to the stone-cutter, even more than to those who had criticized and abhorred his productions, the gargoyles were alive, they possessed a vitality and a sentiency of their own. And most of all did they seem to live when the summer drew to an end and the autumn rains had gathered upon Vyones. Then, when the full cathedral gutters poured above the streets, one might have thought that the actual spittle of a foul malevolence, the very slaver of an impure lust, had somehow been mingled with the water that ran in rills from the mouths of the gargoyles.

2

At that time, in the year of our Lord, 1138, Vyones was the principal town of the province of Averoigne. On two sides the great, shadow-haunted forest, a place of equivocal legends, of loups-garous and phantoms, approached to the very walls and flung its umbrage upon them at early forenoon and evening. On the other sides there lay cultivated fields, and gentle streams that meandered among willows or poplars, and roads that ran through an open plain to the high châteaux of noble lords and to regions beyond Averoigne.

The town itself was prosperous, and had never shared in the ill-fame of the bordering forest. It had long been sanctified by the presence of two nunneries and a monastery; and now, with the completion of the long-planned cathedral, it was thought that Vyones would have henceforward the additional protection of a more august holiness; that demon and *stryge* and incubus would keep their distance from its heaven-favored purlieus with a more meticulous caution than before.

Of course, as in all mediæval towns, there had been occasional instances of alleged sorcery or demoniacal possession; and, once or twice, the perilous temptations of succubi had made their inroads on the pious virtue of Vyones. But this was nothing more than might be expected, in a world where the Devil and his works were always more or less rampant. No one could possibly have anticipated the reign of infernal horrors that was to make hideous the latter month of autumn, following the cathedral's erection.

To make the matter even more inexplicable, and more blasphemously dreadful than it would otherwise have been, the first of these horrors occurred in the neighborhood of the cathedral itself and almost beneath its sheltering shadow.

Two men, a respectable clothier named Guillaume Maspier and an equally repu-

table cooper, one Gerome Mazzal, were returning to their lodgings in the late hours of a November eve, after imbibing both the red and white wines of the countryside in more than one tavern. According to Maspier, who alone survived to tell the tale, they were passing along a street that skirted the cathedral square, and could see the bulk of the great building against the stars, when a flying monster, black as the soot of Abaddon, had descended upon them from the heavens and assailed Gerome Mazzal, beating him down with its heavily flapping wings and seizing him with its inch-long teeth and talons.

Maspier was unable to describe the creature with minuteness, for he had seen it but dimly and partially in the unlit street; and moreover, the fate of his companion, who had fallen to the cobblestones with the black devil snarling and tearing at his throat, had not induced Maspier to linger in that vicinity. He had betaken himself from the scene with all the celerity of which he was capable, and had stopped only at the house of a priest, many streets away, where he had related his adventure between shudderings and hiccuppings.

Armed with holy water and aspergillus, and accompanied by many of the townspeople carrying torches, staves and halberds, the priest was led by Maspier to the place of the horror; and there they had found the body of Mazzal, with fearfully mangled face, and throat and bosom lined with bloody lacerations. The demoniac assailant had flown, and it was not seen or encountered again that night; but those who had beheld its work returned aghast to their homes, feeling that a creature of nethermost hell had come to visit the city, and perchance to abide therein.

CONSTERNATION was rife on the morrow, when the story became generally known; and rites of exorcism against the invading demon were performed by the clergy in all public places and before thresholds. But the sprinkling of holy water and the mumbling of stated forms were futile; for the evil spirit was still abroad, and its malignity was proved once more, on the night following the ghastly death of Gerome Mazzal.

The time, it claimed two victims, burghers of high probity and some consequence, on whom it descended in a narrow alley, slaying one of them instantaneously, and dragging down the other from behind as he sought to flee. The shrill cries of the helpless men, and the guttural growling of the demon, were heard by people in the houses along the alley; and some, who were hardy enough to peer from their windows, had seen the departure of the infamous assailant, blotting out the autumn stars with the sable and misshapen foulness of its wings, and hovering in execrable menace above the house-tops.

After this, few people would venture abroad at night, unless in case of dire and exigent need; and those who did venture went in armed companies and were all furnished with flambeaux, thinking thus to frighten away the demon, which they adjudged a creature of darkness that would abhor the light and shrink therefrom, through the nature of its kind. But the boldness of this fiend was beyond measure; for it proceeded to attack more than one company of worthy citizens, disregarding the flaring torches that were thrust in its face, or putting them out with the stenchful wind of its wide vans.

Evidently it was a spirit of homicidal hate; for all the people on whom it seized were grievously mangled or torn to numberless shreds by its teeth and talons. Those who saw it, and survived, were

wont to describe it variously and with much ambiguity; but all agreed in attributing to it the head of a ferocious animal and the wings of a monstrous bird. Some, the most learned in demonology, were fain to identify it with Modo, the spirit of murder; and others took it for one of the great lieutenants of Satan, perhaps Amaimon or Alastor, gone mad with exasperation at the impregnable supremacy of Christ in the holy city of Vyones.

The terror that soon prevailed, beneath the widening scope of these Satanical incursions and depredations, was beyond all belief—a clotted, seething, devil-ridden gloom of superstitious obsession, not to be hinted in modern language. Even by daylight, the Gothic wings of nightmare seemed to brood in undeparting oppression above the city; and fear was everywhere, like the foul contagion of some epidemic plague. The inhabitants went their way in prayer and trembling; and the archbishop himself, as well as the subordinate clergy, confessed an inability to cope with the ever-growing horror. An emissary was sent to Rome, to procure water that had been specially sanctified by the Pope. This alone, it was thought, would be efficacious enough to drive away the dreadful visitant.

In the meanwhile, the horror waxed, and mounted to its culmination. One eve, toward the middle of November, the abbot of the local monastery of Cordeliers, who had gone forth to administer extreme unction to a dying friend, was seized by the black devil just as he approached the threshold of his destination, and was slain in the same atrocious manner as the other victims.

To this doubly infamous deed, a scarce-believable blasphemy was soon added. On the very next night, while the torn body of the abbot lay on a rich catafalque in the cathedral, and masses were being said and tapers burnt, the demon invaded the high nave through the open door, extinguished all the candles with one flap of its sooty wings, and dragged down no less than three of the officiating priests to an unholy death in the darkness.

Every one now felt that a truly formidable assault was being made by the powers of Evil on the Christian probity of Vyones. In the condition of abject terror, of extreme disorder and demoralization that followed upon this new atrocity, there was a deplorable outbreak of human crime, of murder and rapine and thievery, together with covert manifestations of Satanism, and celebrations of the Black Mass attended by many neophytes.

Then, in the midst of all this pandemoniacal fear and confusion, it was rumored that a second devil had been seen in Vyones; that the murderous fiend was accompanied by a spirit of equal deformity and darkness, whose intentions were those of lechery, and which molested none but women. This creature had frightened several dames and demoiselles and maid-servants into a veritable hysteria by peering through their bedroom windows; and had sidled lasciviously, with uncouth mows and grimaces, and grotesque flappings of its bat-shaped wings, toward others who had occasion to fare from house to house across the nocturnal streets.

However, strange to say, there were no authentic instances in which the chastity of any woman had suffered actual harm from this noisome incubus. Many were approached by it, and were terrified immoderately by the hideousness and lustfulness of its demeanor; but no one was ever touched. Even in that time of horror, both spiritual and corporeal, there were those who made a ribald jest of this singular abstention on the part of the demon, and

said that it was seeking throughout Vyones for some one whom it had not yet found.

3

THE lodgings of Blaise Reynard were separated only by the length of a dark and crooked alley from the tavern kept by Jean Villom, the father of Nicolette. In this tavern, Reynard had been wont to spend his evenings; though his suit was frowned upon by Jean Villom, and had received but scant encouragement from the girl herself. However, because of his well-filled purse and his almost illimitable capacity for wine, Reynard was tolerated. He came early each night, with the falling of darkness, and would sit in silence hour after hour, staring with hot and sullen eyes at Nicolette, and gulping joylessly the potent vintages of Averoigne. Apart from their desire to retain his custom, the people of the tavern were a little afraid of him, on account of his dubious and semi-sorcerous reputation, and also because of his surly temper. They did not wish to antagonize him more than was necessary.

Like everyone else in Vyones, Reynard had felt the suffocating burden of superstitious terror during those nights when the fiendish marauder was hovering above the town and might descend on the luckless wayfarer at any moment, in any locality. Nothing less urgent and imperative than the obsession of his half-bestial longing for Nicolette could have induced him to traverse after dark the length of that winding alley to the tavern door.

The autumn nights had been moonless. Now, on the evening that followed the desecration of the cathedral itself by the murderous devil, a new-born crescent was lowering its fragile, sanguine-colored horn beyond the house-tops as Reynard went forth from his lodgings at the accustomed hour. He lost sight of its comforting beam in the high-walled and narrow alley, and shivered with dread as he hastened onward through shadows that were dissipated only by the rare and timid ray from some lofty window. It seemed to him, at each turn and angle, that the gloom was curded by the unclean umbrage of Satanic wings, and might reveal in another instant the gleaming of abhorrent eyes ignited by the everlasting coals of the Pit. When he came forth at the alley's end, he saw with a start of fresh panic that the crescent moon was blotted out by a cloud that had the semblance of uncouthly arched and pointed vans.

He reached the tavern with a sense of supreme relief, for he had begun to feel a distinct intuition that someone or something was following him, unheard and invisible—a presence that seemed to load the dusk with prodigious menace. He entered, and closed the door behind him very quickly, as if he were shutting it in the face of a dread pursuer.

There were few people in the tavern that evening. The girl Nicolette was serving wine to a mercer's assistant, one Raoul Coupain, a personable youth and a newcomer in the neighborhood, and she was laughing with what Reynard considered unseemly gayety at the broad jests and amorous sallies of this Raoul. Jean Villom was discussing in a low voice the latest enormities of the demons with two cronies at a table in the farthest corner, and was drinking fully as much liquor as his customers.

Glowering with jealousy at the presence of Raoul Coupain, whom he suspected of being a favored rival, Reynard seated himself in silence and stared malignly at the flirtatious couple. No one seemed to have noticed his entrance; for Villom went on talking to his cronies without pause or interruption, and Nicolette and her companion were equally oblivious. To his jealous rage, Reynard

soon added the resentment of one who feels that he is being deliberately ignored. He began to pound on the table with his heavy fists, to attract attention.

Villom, who had been sitting all the while with his back turned, now called out to Nicolette without even troubling to face around on his stool, telling her to serve Reynard. Giving a backward smile at Coupain, she came slowly and with open reluctance to the stone-carver's table.

She was small and buxom, with reddish-gold hair that curled luxuriantly above the short, delicious oval of her face; and she was gowned in a tight-fitting dress of apple-green that revealed the firm, seductive outlines of her hips and bosom. Her air was disdainful and a little cold, for she did not like Reynard and had taken small pains at any time to conceal her aversion. But to Reynard she was lovelier and more desirable than ever, and he felt a savage impulse to seize her in his arms and carry her bodily away from the tavern before the eyes of Raoul Coupain and her father.

"Bring me a pitcher of La Frênaie," he ordered gruffly, in a voice that betrayed his mingled resentment and desire.

Tossing her head lightly and scornfully, with more glances at Coupain, the girl obeyed. She placed the fiery, blood-dark wine before Reynard without speaking, and then went back to resume her bantering with the mercer's assistant.

Reynard began to drink, and the potent vintage merely served to inflame his smoldering enmity and passion. His eyes became venomous, his curling lips malignant as those of the gargoyles he had carved on the new cathedral. A baleful, primordial anger, like the rage of some morose and thwarted faun, burned within him with its slow red fire; but he strove to repress it, and sat silent and motionless, except for the frequent filling and emptying of his wine-cup.

Raoul Coupain had also consumed a liberal quantity of wine. As a result, he soon became bolder in his love-making, and strove to kiss the hand of Nicolette, who had now seated herself on the bench beside him. The hand was playfully withheld; and then, after its owner had cuffed Raoul very lightly and briskly, was granted to the claimant in a fashion that struck Reynard as being no less than wanton.

Snarling inarticulately, with a mad impulse to rush forward and slay the successful rival with his bare hands, he started to his feet and stepped toward the playful pair. His movement was noted by one of the men in the far corner, who spoke warningly to Villom. The tavern-keeper arose, lurching a little from his potations, and came warily across the room with his eyes on Reynard, ready to interfere in case of violence.

REYNARD paused with momentary irresolution, and then went on, half insane with a mounting hatred for them all. He longed to kill Villom and Coupain, to kill the hateful cronies who sat staring from the corner; and then, above their throttled corpses, to ravage with fierce kisses and vehement caresses the shrinking lips and body of Nicolette.

Seeing the approach of the stone-carver, and knowing his evil temper and dark jealousy, Coupain also rose to his feet and plucked stealthily beneath his cloak at the hilt of a little dagger which he carried. In the meanwhile, Jean Villom had interposed his burly bulk between the rivals. For the sake of the tavern's good repute, he wished to prevent the possible brawl.

"Back to your table, stone-cutter," he roared belligerently at Reynard.

Being unarmed, and seeing himself outnumbered, Reynard paused again, though his anger still simmered within him like the contents of a sorcerer's caul-

dron. With ruddy points of murderous flame in his hollow, slitted eyes, he glared at the three people before him, and saw beyond them, with instinctive rather than conscious awareness, the leaded panes of the tavern window, in whose glass the room was dimly reflected with its glowing tapers, its glimmering tableware, the heads of Coupain and Villom and the girl Nicolette, and his own shadowy face among them.

Strangely, and, it would seem, inconsequently, he remembered at that moment the dark, ambiguous cloud he had seen across the moon, and the insistent feeling of obscure pursuit while he had traversed the alley.

Then, as he still gazed irresolutely at the group before him, and its vague reflection in the glass beyond, there came a thunderous crash, and the panes of the window with their pictured scene were shattered inward in a score of fragments. Ere the litter of falling glass had reached the tavern floor, a swart and monstrous form flew into the room, with a beating of heavy vans that caused the tapers to flare troublously, and the shadows to dance like a sabbat of misshapen devils. The thing hovered for a moment, and seemed to tower in a great darkness higher than the ceiling above the heads of Reynard and the others as they turned toward it. They saw the malignant burning of its eyes, like coals in the depth of Tartarean pits, and the curling of its hateful lips on the bared teeth that were longer and sharper than serpent-fangs.

Behind it now, another shadowy flying monster came in through the broken window with a loud flapping of its ribbed and pointed wings. There was something lascivious in the very motion of its flight, even as homicidal hatred and malignity were manifest in the flight of the other. Its satyr-like face was twisted in a horrible, never-changing leer, and its lustful eyes were fixed upon Nicolette as it hung in air beside the first intruder.

Reynard, as well as the other men, was petrified by a feeling of astonishment and consternation so extreme as almost to preclude terror. Voiceless and motionless, they beheld the demoniac intrusion; and the consternation of Reynard, in particular, was mingled with an element of unspeakable surprize, together with a dreadful recognizance. But the girl Nicolette, with a mad scream of horror, turned and started to flee across the room.

As if her cry had been the one provocation needed, the two demons swooped upon their victims. One, with a ferocious slash of its outstretched claws, tore open the throat of Jean Villom, who fell with a gurgling, blood-choked groan; and then, in the same fashion, it assailed Raoul Coupain. The other, in the meanwhile, had pursued and overtaken the fleeing girl, and had seized her in its bestial forearms, with the ribbed wings enfolding her like a hellish drapery.

The room was filled by a moaning whirlwind, by a chaos of wild cries and tossing, struggling shadows. Reynard heard the guttural snarling of the murderous monster, muffled by the body of Coupain, whom it was tearing with its teeth; and he heard the lubricous laughter of the incubus, above the shrieks of the hysterically frightened girl. Then the grotesquely flaring tapers went out in a gust of swirling air, and Reynard received a violent blow in the darkness—the blow of some rushing object, perhaps of a passing wing, that was hard and heavy as stone. He fell, and became insensible.

4

DULLY and confusedly, with much effort, Reynard struggled back to consciousness. For a brief interim, he could not remember where he was nor what had

happened. He was troubled by the painful throbbing of his head, by the humming of agitated voices about him, by the glaring of many lights and the thronging of many faces when he opened his eyes; and, above all, by the sense of nameless but grievous calamity and uttermost horror that weighed him down from the first dawning of sentiency.

Memory returned to him, laggard and reluctant; and with it, a full awareness of his surroundings and situation. He was lying on the tavern floor, and his own warm, sticky blood was rilling across his face from the wound on his aching head. The long room was half filled with people of the neighborhood, bearing torches and knives and halberds, who had entered and were peering at the corpses of Villom and Coupain, which lay amid pools of wine-diluted blood and the wreckage of the shattered furniture and tableware.

Nicolette, with her green gown in shreds, and her body crushed by the embraces of the demon, was moaning feebly while women crowded about her with ineffectual cries and questions which she could not even hear or understand. The two cronies of Villom, horribly clawed and mangled, were dead beside their overturned table.

Stupefied with horror, and still dizzy from the blow that had laid him unconscious, Reynard staggered to his feet, and found himself surrounded at once by inquiring faces and voices. Some of the people were a little suspicious of him, since he was the sole survivor in the tavern, and bore an ill repute; but his replies to their questions soon convinced them that the new crime was wholly the work of the same demons that had plagued Vyones in so monstrous a fashion for weeks past.

Reynard, however, was unable to tell them all that he had seen, or to confess the ultimate sources of his fear and stupefaction. The secret of that which he knew was locked in the seething pit of his tortured and devil-ridden soul.

Somehow, he left the ravaged inn, he pushed his way through the gathering crowd with its terror-muted murmurs, and found himself alone on the midnight streets. Heedless of his own possible peril, and scarcely knowing where he went, he wandered through Vyones for many hours; and somewhile in his wanderings, he came to his own workshop. With no assignable reason for the act, he entered, and re-emerged with a heavy hammer, which he carried with him during his subsequent peregrinations. Then, driven by his awful and unremissive torture, he went on till the pale dawn had touched the spires and the house-tops with a ghostly glimmering.

By a half-conscious compulsion, his steps had led him to the square before the cathedral. Ignoring the amazed verger, who had just opened the doors, he entered and sought a stairway that wound tortuously upward to the tower on which his own gargoyles were ensconced.

In the chill and livid light of sunless morning, he emerged on the roof; and leaning perilously from the verge, he examined the carven figures. He felt no surprize, only the hideous confirmation of a fear too ghastly to be named, when he saw that the teeth and claws of the malign, cat-headed griffin were stained with darkening blood; and that shreds of apple-green cloth were hanging from the talons of the lustful, bat-winged satyr.

It seemed to Reynard, in the dim ashen light, that a look of unspeakable triumph, of intolerable irony, was imprinted on the face of this latter creature. He stared at it with fearful and agonizing fascination, while impotent rage, abhorrence, and repentance deeper than that of the damned arose within him in a smothering flood. He was hardly aware that he had raised the iron hammer and had struck wildly at

the satyr's horned profile, till he heard the sullen, angry clang of impact, and found that he was tottering on the edge of the roof to retain his balance.

The furious blow had merely chipped the features of the gargoyle, and had not wiped away the malignant lust and exultation. Again Reynard raised the heavy hammer.

It fell on empty air; for, even as he struck, the stone-carver felt himself lifted and drawn backward by something that sank into his flesh like many separate knives. He staggered helplessly, his feet slipped, and then he was lying on the granite verge, with his head and shoulders over the dark, deserted street.

Half swooning, and sick with pain, he saw above him the other gargoyle, the claws of whose right foreleg were firmly embedded in his shoulder. They tore deeper, as if with a dreadful clenching. The monster seemed to tower like some fabulous beast above its prey; and he felt himself slipping dizzily across the cathedral gutter, with the gargoyle twisting and turning as if to resume its normal position over the gulf. Its slow, inexorable movement seemed to be part of his vertigo. The very tower was tilting and revolving beneath him in some unnatural nightmare fashion.

Dimly, in a daze of fear and agony, Reynard saw the remorseless tiger-face bending toward him with its horrid teeth laid bare in an eternal rictus of diabolic hate. Somehow, he had retained the hammer. With an instinctive impulse to defend himself, he struck at the gargoyle, whose cruel features seemed to approach him like something seen in the ultimate madness and distortion of delirium.

Even as he struck, the vertiginous turning movement continued, and he felt the talons dragging him outward on empty air. In his cramped, recumbent position, the blow fell short of the hateful face and came down with a dull clangor on the foreleg whose curving talons were fixed in his shoulder like meat-hooks. The clangor ended in a sharp cracking sound; and the leaning gargoyle vanished from Reynard's vision as he fell. He saw nothing more, except the dark mass of the cathedral tower, that seemed to soar away from him and to rush upward unbelievably in the livid, starless heavens to which the belated sun had not yet risen.

It was the archbishop Ambrosius, on his way to early mass, who found the shattered body of Reynard lying face downward in the square. Ambrosius crossed himself in startled horror at the sight; and then, when he saw the object that was still clinging to Reynard's shoulder, he repeated the gesture with a more than pious promptness.

He bent down to examine the thing. With the infallible memory of a true art-lover, he recognized it at once. Then, through the same clearness of recollection, he saw that the stone foreleg, whose claws were so deeply buried in Reynard's flesh, had somehow undergone a most unnatural alteration. The paw, as he remembered it, should have been slightly bent and relaxed; but now it was stiffly outthrust and elongated, as if, like the paw of a living limb, it had reached for something, or had dragged a heavy burden with its ferine talons.

A Midnight Confession

By J. PAUL SUTER

From the death cell in the big prison came a weird summons to right a grave wrong

DOCTOR MADDERN threw back the gray hair from his forehead with a petulant flick of his long hand. He had been impatient with the telephone receiver, too, snapping it back upon the hook as if it had been to blame. Now his ruddy face crinkled in a little sardonic smile at the futility of both gestures. The telephone was not at fault. Neither was his hair. Nevertheless, even a doctor, inured as doctors are to unpleasant scenes, should not be expected to welcome an interview with a patient condemned to be hanged within two weeks.

Of course, he would go. The warden had said "at once," and had rather insisted on a promise. And delay would not help matters. Every day, Maddern conjectured, would make Crawford a little more desperate, a little harder to talk to. The shadow of the gallows would sink deeper into his soul. What a fool the man had been! There really had been nothing to hinder his illicit love affair. Mrs. Crawford had been too ill to interfere, and she would have died in a year or so, anyway. Why should he have poisoned her?

Maddern shrugged his stylishly coated shoulders, and rose to answer his wealthy patient's appeal. He had not far to go. It was one of the curious features of the sensational Crawford case—a feature which the newspapers had not overlooked—that a circle with less than a quarter-mile radius included the abodes of all the principal participants, including even the chief witnesses. Appropriately in the center of the circle stood Mrs. Trelevant's prim old mansion. Some nimble reporter had dubbed her the "gossiping widow," in recognition of what her tongue had done to bring her next-door neighbor to the gallows. But for her, Crawford might still have been leading his free, sophisticated life. She had started the stories which had led the police first to incline their ears incredulously, then to exhume the remains; and hard upon that, following the discovery of arsenic in the stomach, had come the indictment and the trial—with Carrie Trelevant as chief witness for the state.

As he descended his own steps, Maddern could look directly across the aristocratic square at her house and Crawford's, side by side, and at Crawford's garage, over which John Chubbs, his chauffeur, lived—another witness for the state. Nor was that the limit of the curious "Crawford Case" congestion. For Warden Sterling, of the penitentiary, resided not two blocks from the doctor's. He, too, was a patient of Maddern's. And little Nonnie Jones had lived at the extreme southern edge of the half-mile circle, in the poor Smoky Gulch district. Maddern's rather stern face softened a trifle as he thought of her. She was Mrs. Crawford, now. The poor devil had done the right thing. He had married her shortly after his wife's death.

But one grim piece of stage property remained to complete the grouping for that sinister circle, and it was there. For a brisk twenty minutes' walk, directly past the Crawford and the Trelevant places,

brought Maddern to the penitentiary, where Crawford resided now, where he was to die.

Warden Sterling was ticketed in Maddern's mind as an inn-keeper of coaching days, who had come a century too late to his fat perfection. In his office to the left of the main corridor, he wheezed and blinked hospitality. His sides quivered. His small, bright eyes twinkled. Maddern reflected unpleasantly as he shook the warden's welcoming hand that doubtless the same cordial reception had greeted Crawford. Sterling prided himself on making his charges feel at home. Could the man be decently funereal, the doctor wondered, when he hanged them?

"You walked, doc? Yes, yes! Nothing like it, nothing like it! I do as much as you, though you wouldn't think it. Not so many steps, but the exercise is there. Three times as much weight lifted with each step. Get it, doc?" He prodded the tall, silent doctor in the ribs, and brought up a deep chuckle from the region of his stomach. Then, with no change in his jovial tone: "Crawford wants to talk to you. Awfully sad case! It will seem like hanging one's own brother. He wants to see you in his cell. *In his cell,* he says. I told him he'd have to talk pretty low not to be overheard, but he kept on insisting. Is it all right, doc? You'll see him there?"

Maddern nodded, and slipped in a query as to how the warden's liver had been behaving. That delayed the interview ten minutes more; but with what seemed undue speed, nevertheless, he found himself sitting side by side on a cot, alone with the condemned man, and the cell door locked.

THE light was bad. The fact that he was actually within a cell in the death row caused the doctor a little in-

"Read this," the said abruptly.

ward panic—after all, no one knows what the future will bring him—Lem Crawford would not have guessed anything like this, a year before. Life in the cell seemed stiff and unnatural, like the opening and closing of dead fingers under galvanic force. Yet, for all that, Maddern found himself startled at how little his old patient had changed. Crawford had gone through this, and his curly brown hair was still carefully brushed, his face cleanly shaven. There was still about his rounded person the sleekness and poise of the high-bred gentleman. Even his voice, carefully lowered to the requirements of the cell, had lost little of its careless languor. Many an evening, in the well-furnished Crawford library, the man now condemned to die had talked with him over the cigars in just that tone. As if to bring the past back even more strikingly, Crawford began the conversation with one of his infectious laughs.

"Perk up a little, Mad," he entreated. "*You're* not going to be hanged, you know!"

"I wish *you* were not," the doctor responded, stiffly.

Crawford grinned maliciously at the inane reply.

"I was sure you'd never have wished anything like this on me. But tell me something, old man." He darted a keen glance into Maddern's embarrassed face. "On your honor, now! Cross your heart, and all that! Do you think I'm a murderer?"

The doctor was terribly perturbed. His eyes dropped. He was framing an evasive reply, when the prisoner laughed, dryly.

"Thanks, Mad. You have a beautifully expressive face. But don't you see how my question clears the air? We understand each other, now. I can't say that I blame you." He looked off, reminiscently, into the gray twilight of the cell. "Under the same circumstances, I'd believe you guilty. Certainly, I should!"

He grinned into the fascinated but half-averted eyes of the doctor.

"Don't look so serious, Mad! It's not going to be very awful. A little darkness before the eyes, a little annoying tightness around the neck, a jerk, and—bye-bye! That's all. I am actually looking forward to it. It will be a new sensation—I've had all the old ones. All except suicide, and I've been tempted at times to try that. I nearly drowned once, in my school days—down for the third time—and I'm making a bet with myself this won't be so rotten as that. Wish you could hold the stakes, old man. Still, there *is* something you can do for me."

Maddern was beginning to murmur that he would be delighted, when the prisoner's sardonic grin stopped him.

"Don't be too sure. I'm going to ask you to believe me innocent for the next ten minutes. Can you do it?"

"I'll try."

"Very good. To make it easier for you, Mad, I am going to say to you, as one gentleman to another, that I didn't kill my wife. This needn't affect your conclusions from the evidence. It is merely my assurance to you, as a gentleman. If I were really guilty, I could not reasonably ask you to believe me innocent, even for ten minutes. You see that?"

The physician nodded. Crawford grinned again, somewhat more maliciously than before.

"Do you know, I'm sorry for you, Mad," he went on. "You old, hidebound, religious bachelor, with your spiritistic theories and all the rest of it! You're due to be horribly shocked, in another minute. I'm going to confess to you that all they said about little Nonnie and me was true—in a general way, that is. I think most of Carrie Trelevant's evidence was made

up out of her head. She had no chance to see my goings on, except when I visited her. But Chubbs, my chauffeur—he was a damned poor sport to say what he did, after the way I treated him—he had it right. Oh, yes, he had it right." Crawford stroked his smooth cheek with his plump, well-manicured hand, and made a wry face. "I married Nonnie immediately after Mabel died; that was the thing to do. But we kept the marriage a secret, because——" He laughed. "Well, you'd have kept it a secret, wouldn't you?"

"I suppose so," Maddern admitted, shortly.

"So much for that, then. Does it startle you to know that, within two weeks after Mabel died—which, by the way, was a week after I married Nonnie—Carrie Trelevant proposed marriage to me? Does that startle you, old man?"

The doctor nodded—which indicator of his feelings was made more convincing by the fact that he actually had started at the disclosure.

"I thought it might," Crawford went on, with a flitting smile. "She's such a proper 'old maid.' I'll bet she talks spiritism and higher life to you by the hour when you call to treat her nerves. But she had taken it for granted—*taken it for granted*, mind you!—that I had been in love with her all along, and had only been waiting for Mabel to die so I'd be free to marry her. Now, Mad, she has been your patient for years. Can you surmise how she acted when I declined her overtures—which I was obliged to do rather violently before she would believe me in earnest?"

Doctor Maddern gazed thoughtfully at the bare floor of the cell, then at the smilingly expectant face of the condemned man.

"I should say that she must have been furious," he said, at last.

Crawford grinned.

"I suppose 'furious' will have to serve," he agreed. "It seems hardly strong enough, but I don't know a stronger. The thing happened in her drawing-room. I had gone over there to pay her a neighborly visit—to chat a little. We had a good many interests in common, and she isn't dull, you know. I won't tell you what she did, or exactly what she said. It hardly seems fair for me to tell you that. But when it was all over—when she understood, beyond doubt, that I valued her as a friend and nothing more—she simply stood up, white and dumb, and motioned me from the room. I think she could have killed me at that moment. I'm sure she could, some weeks later, when the news of my marriage leaked out. It was just after that news that she began talking about me."

"When she began to tell about your administering the medicine to Mrs. Crawford?" the doctor demanded.

Crawford nodded.

"She told it like an artist. I couldn't deny a word. She did run over to tea with Mabel, just as she said. And I did mix the medicine. She left the inference that I mixed some arsenic in with it, and what could I say to that but deny it? Of course, I had opportunity. I use it in my garden. So does she—so do you. The damning thing against me at the trial was, that I seemed to have motive. She had motive, too. She might easily have dropped the poison into Mabel's tea. But who was to believe she had proposed to me? I had no witnesses to that."

He stopped, suddenly, and shrugged his shoulders with a laugh.

"You attended Mabel, old man. Why didn't you call it death by poisoning?" he demanded.

"Because, in her condition, any irritation of the stomach could have caused those symptoms, and have hastened the end," Maddern replied.

"Did the idea of arsenic occur to you?"

The doctor hesitated; then he said: "Later. After your second marriage became public."

"But you were too good a sport to advertise it?"

"Why should I? It was only a suspicion. She had eaten both strawberries and pickles at lunch, against my orders. That would have been quite sufficient."

Crawford levelled a whimsical glance at his guest.

"I'm afraid my ten minutes is up. Give me a renewal for another ten. I want you to continue believing in me until I'm through. What would you say, old chap, if I suggested a plan by which you might possibly get me clear of the noose?"

The doctor looked up with utter incredulity on his face.

"I fear——" he began.

"Of course you do. You fear it can't be done. And perhaps it can't. But forget that for a minute and answer a question for me. You know Carrie. You know her kinks and her hobbies. What's the chief one of them all?"

"You mean spiritism?" Doctor Maddern inquired, slowly.

Crawford nodded, with a little chuckle of satisfaction.

"I knew there couldn't be two answers to that question. I've had some dealings with the lady, too. If ever any one believed in ghosts, she does! Very well—suppose a ghost appeared to her, and commanded her to confess in writing—would she do it?"

"Whose ghost?" the doctor demanded.

"Mine."

A GOOD many years of active practise, during which he had been father confessor to most human quirks and weaknesses, had inoculated Doctor Maddern quite effectively against surprize. Yet he started slightly, seeing which the malicious grin of the condemned man broadened.

"Answer the question just as it stands, Mad. I've a good reason for asking it."

"Well——" The doctor passed a long hand thoughtfully over his forehead. "Taking your question at its face value, then, I should say this: that if Carrie Trelevant should be guilty, such an apparition as you mention very likely would bring her to confess. But if she should not be guilty——"

Crawford leaned forward, with a sudden brightening of the eyes.

"If she should not be guilty—yes. What then?"

"She wouldn't confess, even for a ghost. She is too strong-minded. She'd want to know why, if the thing was supernatural, it should be accusing her falsely."

"That's fine, old chap." Crawford's infectious laugh rang through the cell, though he was careful not to raise his voice when he spoke again. "If you think the lady would not confess unless she really is guilty, you shouldn't object to help me induce a confession. Could you call here tomorrow?"

"Probably," the doctor answered, dubiously.

"Drop in at my house on the way over. Get my keys from Wilson—I've kept him on. There's one key in the bunch which fits the Trelevant grade door. Mabel found it out, months ago, by chance—she and Carrie were always visiting back and forth, you know. I'll fix the details with old Sterling, then you can talk with Carrie late tomorrow evening."

Doctor Maddern looked blank, and the condemned man went on, with a trace of his mischievous grin.

"Perhaps I had better explain, before you try to save me on a lunacy plea. You'll call upon Mrs. Carrie Trelevant tomorrow evening. Inform her that I am dead.

Explain that I committed suicide in my cell. Opening a vein will answer as well as anything else. Add any frills you wish, but make the matter of my death perfectly clear. Will you do that?"

"Go on with the rest of your plan," Maddern said.

"The rest depends somewhat on old Sterling. He has known me for years—ever since I was a youngster. He doesn't believe me guilty. This is confidential, of course, but"—he lowered his voice to a barely audible whisper—"he offered to let me escape, after the governor refused a commutation—said he'd take the consequences himself. Of course, I wouldn't accept. Even if I could have made a getaway, it would have been a rotten thing to do to poor old Sterling. But he knows about this plan. He is going to let me out at midnight tomorrow night. You can wait at home for a telephone call from Carrie Trelevant. It will come—if the trick has worked. When you have her written confession—if you have it—bring it to old Sterling. He deserves the first sight of it. He is going to spend the night in his office. I will be back in my cell long before that, and he will bring the news up to me."

Maddern stared.

"Do you think this wild, hair-brained scheme is likely to succeed?" he demanded, slowly.

"It's a forlorn hope, I admit. Suppose it doesn't work. Who will be most likely to suffer—besides myself?"

The doctor hesitated.

"Probably I shall be—though I can always take refuge under misinformation."

"Are you willing to accept the chance?"

Strangely enough, upon that, the most momentous question of all, Doctor Maddern did not hesitate. He rose, and extended his hand.

"It might work," he conceded, doubtfully. "At any rate, I am willing to chance it." He smiled, and shrugged his shoulders. "When I came in here, Lem, I thought you guilty. Now, I'm not so sure. If Mrs. Trelevant did it—and if she believes you dead, and out of the reach of her vengeance—who knows?—she might confess."

He was met in the lower hall by the jovial warden, whose round face was almost serious.

"Are you going to do it, doc?" he whispered; and, when Maddern nodded:

"Don't think I'm taking a chance. I've known him all his life, and he's a gentleman. He'll come back. I'll spend the night here myself so as to fix his getting out and coming in. Not a single, solitary soul will be a bit the wiser, doc. It's a crazy thing to do, but"—he repeated the doctor's own words of a few minutes before—"it might work."

CARRIE TRELEVANT rose with outstretched hand to greet the doctor. Usually she amused him—all her movements seemed so carefully calculated to show her to the best advantage. She had her day and her night technique—the latter being in evidence just now. Did she ever, he wondered, vary her initial position in the big Turkish chair by more than the fraction of an inch? When he called upon her after nightfall, that was where she was to be found: curled up in it, like a girl; her face drooped pensively over a book—but not drooped too far, lest the yellow light of the piano lamp should emphasize her over-high forehead. She always looked up, with an unsophisticated start which gave excuse for a moment of surprized, rounded eyes—she had pretty black eyes. Next, she ran half a dozen steps toward the door, then suddenly remembered to be dignified. Maddern saw her go through it all, as he had seen it before. The usual reflection crossed his mind—that the kittenish tricks of the girl

of twenty should have been lost somewhere on the road to thirty-five; but tonight she frightened him a little, too. Was she, after all, dangerous? Suppose she should read his mind? His conscience troubled him slightly, because of the trick he was about to play upon her; because, too, of his visit to the penitentiary that morning, when he had left Lem Crawford the bunch of keys. He had been treating her for five years—with the endless treatments demanded by a wealthy woman whose illness is mainly of the imagination. He knew her well. At least, he thought that he did. But he had never considered her dangerous.

"Oh, you busy man!" she began, in her low contralto. This was her bantering technique—he knew that, too. "You have so many really important engagements tomorrow. You can't spare a moment for little me. So you are here tonight, instead. That was why you telephoned, wasn't it—Doctor Maddern?"

Even the last two words were carefully calculated—drawled, teasingly, as if she had almost a mind to call him by his first name, but dared not. Sometimes he enjoyed her teasing. Tonight it seemed out of place.

"This isn't a professional call," he said, gravely. "I have news."

"News?" A rising, nicely modulated inflection. The rounded eye technique.

"News of Lem Crawford."

"Oh."

No technique at all about that monosyllable. She had thrown into neutral. She was watching him narrowly as she subsided again into her Turkish chair, and he disposed himself in a pliant wicker, which was a favorite of his.

"Lem is not going to be hanged, after all."

That got her! She was sitting upright in a second.

"Has his sentence been commuted?" she blazed at him.

He smiled, sadly; slowly shook his head.

"You don't mean—a pardon?"

"Neither a commutation nor a pardon. Lem is no longer in the penitentiary. He has escaped."

He could see her relax, and hear the outrush of her breath.

"They'll catch him," she said, lightly.

He paused a moment, then let her have it.

"Not where *he* has gone. Lem committed suicide this evening in his cell. I thought you would like me to be the first to tell you, Carrie—we have all been friends together, in days gone by. . . ."

She took it nicely. He found her even willing to talk about Crawford, now that he was dead—to comment on his pleasing personality, his wasted life, and such things. She avoided certain phases of the subject: Mabel; little Nonnie; her own testimony at the trial.

But when he remarked, airily: "You and I are the ones who have always speculated about the other world—but old Lem, who never speculated in his life, I imagine, is the first to know . . ." She shivered, and darted a fleeting, half-ashamed glance toward the doorway, where silken hangings framed the blackness of the big hall. He tried to command his features while she rang for the maid, and directed the hall light to be lit. Usually, she preferred the room she was in to be the little oasis of light in a darkened house.

Maddern was too good a psychologist to spoil his work by lingering. He left, promising to make his usual professional call in the morning. She followed him girlishly to the big front door, which was her regular technique for taking leave of him, and he answered her wave as he ran

down the stone steps; but when the door closed behind her, and he was walking across the soft grass of the square, he said to himself, with a grim tightening of the lips:

"She did it!"

He was rather late in cleaning up the work for the day. It was after eleven when he found himself a book, and settled down to be comfortable in his library until Carrie should telephone—if she did telephone. He thought she would, for he had paved the way rather nicely for Crawford's little theatricals. She would certainly need a doctor after they were over. He wondered how the warden would pass Lem through the gate without arousing the suspicion of the guard. Doubtless they would go out together, and Lem would be disguised in some way. Suppose Crawford should meet one of the Trelevant servants? The doctor speculated on that possibility, too, but finally dismissed it with a shrug. Old Lem would be equal to it. As he had said, himself, there weren't many experiences he hadn't gone through. Probably he would frighten the servant into hysterics. Suppose, too, that Carrie should not send for her doctor? But she would. Crawford had it in mind, no doubt, to direct her to do so, in order that her confession should be properly witnessed.

Maddern yawned, threw down his book, and listened to the deep voice of his library clock chiming midnight. It was time for the "apparition" to leave the penitentiary. He wondered what sort of ghost Crawford would make. Possibly Carrie would favor him with a few details, but he fancied not. He could get them later, from Lem.

He picked up the book again. Crawford would require at least fifteen minutes to make the trip, and maybe another ten for the performance. At about half-past twelve, he could expect a telephone call.

But at five minutes after twelve the bell rang. He snatched up the receiver. Here was a complication! Who else was calling him? But it was Carrie Trelevant.

She was incoherent. Correct enunciation, studied modulation, her fine contralto nuances, all were flung to the winds. Yet she made herself clear. She wanted Maddern.

This time, he drove over, so as to have his car ready for use if need be. The house blazed with light. She met him at the front door, took his hand, and dragged him into her drawing-room. She had never done that before, even in her most girlish moments.

"Read this," she said abruptly, and collapsed upon the davenport.

The paper she flung him was in her writing, but not in the even, precise hand she usually wrote. This writing was barely legible. The letters tumbled over one another, with vertical strokes which trembled in their short descent, wobbling, infirm capitals, "t's" without a cross. Yet it was her hand. It contained a confession, in detail, of Mabel Crawford's murder.

She must have been watching him, from the heap into which she had crumpled on the davenport. For, as he finished and looked up, she came to him, without a word, took the paper from his hand, and signed it.

"Sign as a witness," she directed, handing him the pen; then, as he did so: "Now take it . . ." She hesitated. For a moment he looked into her eyes. He never forgot them, afterward. "Take it to the prosecuting attorney."

She was literally pushing him from the room, when she paused and spoke. Her voice was calm, but there was no timbre to it. It was the skeleton of a voice.

"You have often speculated, Doctor

Maddern, as to whether the dead return," she said. "They do!"

That was all. He was tempted at that moment to tell her the truth, but he yielded instead to her wordless urge, and left the room. Looking back from the brilliantly lighted hallway, he saw her there. She stood holding to the library table. Her hair was unkempt. A streak of gray he had never seen stuck out prominently. Her cheeks were dead white. Yet, as she caught him looking at her, she tried to smile. It was the wreck of her technique.

THROUGHOUT the short drive to the warden's office, he felt ignoble, like a man who has struck a woman. Reason did not enter into the feeling. He should have been elated, he told himself, to have helped save an innocent man, and that man his friend, from the gallows. But he was not elated. He remembered Carrie Trelevant's eyes.

Once the paper had been delivered to old Sterling, the matter would be out of his hands. Sterling would turn it over to the prosecuting attorney. Then would follow the trial—that taste of hell again—but this trial would be brief. He wondered, however, whether there would be a trial. Possibly he had already seen the last of Carrie Trelevant.

Old Sterling was sprawled in the swivel chair at his desk. The pouches of his rosy cheeks hung loosely. He seemed tired. He glanced up as Maddern stepped into the office, and pointed to an armchair.

"Hadn't any trouble getting in, I suppose? I left word at the gate. Thought maybe you were on your way here, when I couldn't get you at the house, so I waited."

Maddern unfolded the confession and silently handed it to the warden.

The old man read it. It fluttered from his hand, as he looked up. His jaw sagged, and there was sweat on his forehead.

"Where did you get this?" he demanded.

"You saw the signature," the doctor retorted, dryly. "Crawford's trick worked—that's all. I feel like a cad, and I rather think he will, too. My God, Sterling!" He grinned, ruefully. "She reminded me how we used to speculate as to whether the dead return—and assured me that they do!"

The warden had risen shakily to his feet. He seemed bewildered.

"She said they return?" he repeated. "What did she mean by that?"

"Why"—Doctor Maddern felt a trifle impatient with the old man—"you know the arrangement, Sterling. I had the stage all set. She thought Crawford dead. Naturally, then, when he called on her, she took him for a ghost. You can't blame her, when you consider that she believes in ghosts, anyway. She——"

"Wait a moment." The warden was breathing heavily. His face had lost its usual color. "You say Crawford called on her?"

The doctor glared.

"You know he called, Sterling. The thing was all arranged among us. Are you growing absent-minded?"

But the old man ignored his tone, and continued, doggedly: "What time did he call?"

"Well—she telephoned me at five minutes after twelve, and everything was over. That's something I don't understand, either. You were to let him out at midnight. He couldn't possibly have got over there in five minutes. You must have slipped on the time."

The warden sat down, heavily. His big cheeks sagged more than ever, but his eyes looked across brightly at the doctor,

with a peculiar shade of horror in their depths.

"You visited him again this morning, doctor," he said, slowly. "Did you, by any chance, leave a bunch of keys in his cell?"

"They were his keys. One of them fitted Carrie Trelevant's grade door. That was why I came—to bring that key."

"But you left the whole bunch?"

Doctor Maddern nodded.

"Let me ask you something." Sterling seemed to be following a definite line of reasoning. "Did Crawford strike you as being convinced of Carrie Trelevant's guilt?"

"Well—yes."

"Was he sure he could make her confess?"

The doctor hesitated a moment, to pick his words.

"Perhaps not sure, but confident."

The warden nodded. "Suppose a *sure* means of escape had presented itself to him—a means which would be absolutely certain, yet which would not greatly compromise either you or me. Would he have taken it?"

"*I* should have taken it, in his place," Maddern returned.

"Doctor Maddern." The old man's voice had sunk to a whisper. His bright eyes were fastened on the doctor's face. "There was a little pen-knife on the ring among the bunch of keys you left this morning. You remember it?"

The doctor nodded, with a start.

"The understanding was that I should release him at midnight. I went up to his cell. It was just midnight—I didn't slip on the time. But he was gone."

"You mean he *had* broken out?" the doctor demanded, almost shouting in his astonishment; but the warden shook his head.

"He had escaped by the one *sure* way. The little knife showed him how. He used it just back of the left ear, doctor. When I went up at midnight, he was dead."

Arkham

By ROBERT E. HOWARD

Drowsy and dull with age the houses blink
  On aimless streets the rat-gnawed years forget—
But what inhuman figures leer and slink
  Down the old alleys when the moon has set?

The Dark Angel

By SEABURY QUINN

A tale of seemingly inexplicable murders, a terrible visitant that spreads weird death, and a daring exploit of Jules de Grandin

"TIENS, my friend," Jules de Grandin selected an Hoyo de Monterey from the humidor and set it alight with gusto, "say what you will, there is no combination more satisfying to the soul and body than that of the processes of digestion and slow poisoning by nicotine. No." He regarded the gleaming tip of his diminutive patent-leather evening pump with marked satisfaction, and wafted a smoke-wreath slowly toward the ceiling. "To make our happiness complete," he added, "needs only the presence of——"

"Detective Sergeant Costello, if ye please, sor," interrupted Nora McGinnis, my household factotum, appearing at the drawing-room door with the unexpected suddenness of a specter taking shape from nothingness.

"Eh, do you say so, *petite?*" the little Frenchman answered with a chuckle. "Bid him enter, by all means."

The big, red-headed plain-clothes man advanced in Nora's wake, a smile of real affection for the Frenchman on his face. Behind him marched an equally big man, ruddy-faced, white-haired, with that look of handsome distinction so many commonplace Irishmen acquire at middle life.

"Shake hands wid me friend, Chief O'Toole, o' th' Norfolk Downs force, gentlemen," Costello bade with a nod toward his companion. "Timmie, this is Doctor de Grandin I've been tellin' ye about, an' Doctor Trowbridge."

"Pleased to meet yez, gentlemen," Chief O'Toole acknowledged with a smile and bone-crushing grip for each of us. "Jerry's been tellin' me ye might be willin' to give me a lift wid th' damndest—beg pardon—th' most puzzlin' case I've ever had th' evil luck to run agin."

De Grandin transferred his cigar to his left hand and tweaked the needle points of his tightly waxed blond mustache with his right. "If the good Sergeant Costello vouches for the case, *mon chef,* I make no doubt that it will intrigue me," he answered. "Tell us of it, if you please."

"Well, sor," Chief O'Toole lowered himself ponderously into a chair and regarded the gray uniform cap he had removed with a stare which seemed to indicate he sought inspiration from its silk-lined depths, "well, sor, it's this way. Over to Norfolk Downs we've been havin' one hell o'—one most distressful time o' it, an' none o' us seems able to say what it's all about." He paused, twisting the cap between his large, white hands and examining its peaked vizor as though he'd never seen the thing before.

"U'm?" de Grandin shot a quick glance at the visitor. "This is of interest, but not instructive. If you will amplify your statement——"

"Beg pardon, sor, maybe I could help," Costello interrupted. "Timmie — Chief O'Toole—an' me's been friends for twenty year an' more. We wuz harness bulls together an' got our detectives' badges at th' same time. When they started that swell real estate development over to Norfolk Downs, they put in a paid police force, an' offered th' job o'

"He fired again, coolly, deliberately, taking careful aim before he squeezed the trigger."

chief to Timmie. He's a good officer, sor, as none knows better than I, but keepin' burglars in their place an' nabbin' speeders is more in his line than handlin' this sort o' trouble. There's been some mighty queer doin's at Norfolk Downs o' late, an' th' whole community's terrified. Not only that; they're sayin' Timmie's not competent, an' one more killin' like they've had an' he'll be warmin' some employment office bench. He wuz over to me house this evenin' to talk things over, an' th' minute I heard about it I says to meself, 'Here's a case fer Doctor de Grandin, or I'm a Dutchman.' So here we are, sor."

O'Toole took up the explanation. "If ye're askin' me about it, I'll say th' Divil's in it, sor," he told de Grandin solemnly.

"The Devil?" de Grandin eyed him

narrowly. "You mean that Satan has a hand in it, or do you use an idiom?"

"No, sor, I mean exactly what I said," the chief replied. " 'Twas a matter o' three months or so ago—th' night afther Christmas—when Mike Scarsci got his'n. Everybody in th' Downs knew Mike, and no one knew much good o' him. Some said he wuz a bootlegger, and some a runner fer a joint down Windsor way—th' kind o' place where ye git what ye pay fer an' no questions asked, an' if ye feel th' want o' womanly sympathy, there's a young an' pretty hostess to give ye what ye crave. However that might be, sor, we used to see Mike sliding round th' place, whispering to th' respectable folks who might not be so good when they thought no one wuz lookin', an' I'd 'a' run him out o' town, only I didn't dast offend his customers. So I wuz content to keep a eye on him, just until he pulled off sumpin I could rightly pinch him fer.

"Well, that night we heard him drive up th' Edgemere Road in that big, expensive roadster o' his, an' seen him turn th' corner like he wuz headed fer one o' th' big houses on th' hill. I didn't see it meself, sor, but one o' me men, name o' Gibbons, wuz near by when it happened. He seen th' car go round th' bend an' disappear behind some rhododendron bushes, an' all of a sudden he heard somebody give a yell as if th' Divil's self wuz on 'im, an' then two shots come close together. Next moment wuz a flash o' fire so bright it blinded him, an'—that wuz all.

"But when he came a-runnin' to th' place where Scarsci's car wuz stalled, he found Mike wid his gun still in his hand, an' th' front mashed out o' his head—leastwise, most of it wuz gone, but enough remained to show *th' footprint of a monster goat stamped on 'im,* sor. Furthermore, there wuz th' smell o' brimstone in th' air."

DE GRANDIN raised the narrow black brows which showed such marked contrast to his wheat-blond hair. *"Eh bien, mon chef,"* he murmured. "This devil of yours would seem to be a most discriminating demon; at least in Monsieur Scarsci's case. Am I to understand that you give credence to the story?"

A tinge of red showed in O'Toole's broad face. "Ye are, sor," he returned. "I wuz brought up amongst goats, sor; I'd know their tracks when I seen 'em, even if me eyes were tight shut; an' I recognized th' print on Scarsci's forehead. Besides——" he paused a moment, swallowing uneasily, and a dogged, stubborn look came in his eyes. "Besides, I seen th' thing meself, sor." O'Toole breathed quickly, pantingly, as one who shifts a burden from his chest.

"We all thought it mighty queer how Mike got kilt," he went on, "but th' coroner said he must 'a' run into a tree or sumpin—though th' saints knows there wuz no tree there—so we had to let it pass. But widin another week, sor, Old Man Withers wuz found layin' dead furninst th' gate o' his house, an' he died th' same way Mike did—wid th' top mashed out o' his head an' th' mark o' th' beast on his brow. There warn't no possibility o' *his* runnin' into no tree—not even a tree as wuzn't there, sor—for there he wuz, spread-eagled on th' sidewalk wid his mouth wide open, an' his eyes a-starin' at th' sky, an' there wuz blood an' brains oozin' from a hole in his head big enough to put yer fist into.

"There wuz plenty said th' old man wuz a bad lot; it's certain he never let a nickel get away once he got his hands on it, an' many a one as borrowed money from him lived to regret it; but that's

not here nor there. Th' fact is he wuz dead, an' th' jury had to bring it in as homicide, though, o' course, they couldn't blame no one specifically.

"Then, last o' all, wuz Mr. Roscoe. A harmless, inoffensive sort o' cuss he wuz, sor; quiet-spoken an' gentleman-like as any that ye'd meet. He had some money an' didn't need to work, but he wuz a sort o' nut on atheism, an' ran some kind o' paper pokin' fun at th' churches fer his own amusement.

" 'Twas about midnight, ten days ago, when th' thing got *him*. I'd finished up me work at th' Borough Hall, an' wuz headin' fer home when I passed th' bus station. Mr. Roscoe gits off'n th' last bus from Bloomfield, an' we walks along together. As we wuz walkin' past St. Michael's church we seen th' light which burns before th' altar, an', 'O'Toole,' says Mr. Roscoe, ' 'tis a shame that they should waste th' price o' oil to keep that thing a-goin' when there's so much misery an' sufferin' in th' world. If I could have me way,' says he, 'I'd raise th' divil wid——'

"An' then it wuz upon us, sor. Taller than me by a good foot, it wuz, an' all covered wid scales, like a serpent. Two horns wuz growin' from its head, an' its eyes wuz flashin' fire. I couldn't rightly say it had a tail, fer there wuz small chance to look at it; but may I never stir from this here chair if it didn't have a pair o' big, black wings—an' it flew right at us.

"Mr. Roscoe give a funny sort o' cry an' put his cane up to defend hisself. I wuz yankin' at me gun, but me fingers wuz all stiff wid cold, an' th' holster wouldn't seem to come unsnapped.

"Th' next I knew, somethin' give a awful, screamin' laugh, an' then there wuz a flash o' fire right in me face, an' I'm a-coughin' an' a-chokin' wid th' fumes o' sulfur in me nose, an' when I gits so I can see again, there's no one there a-tall but Mr. Roscoe, an' he's stretched out beside me on th' sidewalk wid his skull mashed in an' th' Divil's mark upon his brow. Dead he were, sor; dead as yesterday's newspaper.

"I'd made shift to snatch me gun out whilst th' fire wuz still blindin' me, an' had fired at where I thought th' thing must be, but all I ever found to show that I'd hit sumpin wuz this thing——" From his blouse pocket he withdrew an envelope, and from it took a small, dark object.

De Grandin took it from him, examined it a moment, then passed it on to me. It was a portion of a quill, clipped across the shaft some three or four inches from the tip, the barbs a brilliant black which shone with iridescent luster in the lamplight. Somewhat heavier than any feather I had ever felt, it was, and harder, too, for when I ran my thumb across its edge it rasped my skin almost like the teeth of a fine saw. Indeed, the thing was more like the scale from some gigantic reptile, cut in foliations to simulate a quill, than any feather I had ever seen.

"I never saw a quill like this, before," I told O'Toole, and:

"Here's hopin' that ye never do again, sor," he responded earnestly, "fer as sure as ye're a-settin' on that chair, that there's a feather from a Divil's Angel's wing!"

"BEGGIN' yer pardon, sor," Nora McGinnis once more appeared abruptly at the door, "there's a young man wid a special delivery letter fer Doctor de Grandin. Will ye be afther lookin' at it now, sor, or will it wait?"

"Bring it in at once, if you will be so good," the Frenchman answered. "All special letters merit quick attention."

Bowing mute apology to us, he slit the envelope and glanced quickly through the brief typewritten missive. *"Parbleu,* 'tis very strange!" he exclaimed as he finished reading. "You come to me regarding these so strange events, *mon chef,* and on your heels comes this. Attend me, if you please:

My dear Doctor de Grandin:

I have heard of your ability to arrive at explanations of cases which apparently possess a supernatural aspect, and am writing you to ask if you will take the Borough of Norfolk Downs as client in a case which will undoubtedly command the limit of your talents.

Our police force admit their helplessness, special investigators hired from the best detective agencies have failed to give us any satisfaction. Our people are terrified and the entire community lives in a feeling of constant insecurity.

In view of this I am authorized to offer you a retainer of one thousand dollars immediately upon your acceptance of the case, and an additional fee of fifty dollars a day, plus reasonable expenses, provided you arrive at a solution of the mystery which is not only causing our citizens much anxiety but has already reached the newspapers in a garbled form and is causing much unfavorable publicity for Norfolk Downs as a residential center.

Your promptness in replying will be appreciated by

Yours faithfully,
ROLLAND WILCOX,
Mayor of Norfolk Downs.

"An' will ye take th' case, sor?" O'Toole asked eagerly.

"Sure, Doctor de Grandin, sor, ye'll be doin' me a favor, an' Timmie, too, if ye'll say yes," Costello added.

"Assuredly," de Grandin answered with a vigorous nod. "Tomorrow afternoon the good Doctor Trowbridge and I shall wait upon *Monsieur le Maire* and say to him: *'Voilà, Monsieur,* here we are. Where is the thousand dollars, and where the mystery that you would have us solve? But yes; certainly.' "

2

THE wealthy realtors and expensive architects who mapped out Norfolk Downs had done their work artistically. Houses of approved English architecture, Elizabethan, Tudor, Jacobean, with here and there an example of the Georgian or Regency periods, set well back in tastefully planted grounds along wide, tree-bordered roads which trailed gracefully in curves and avoided every hint of the perpendicularity of city streets. Commercial buildings were restricted to such few shops as were essential to the convenience of the community—a grocery, drug store, delicatessen and motor service station—and these were confined to a circumscribed zone and effectually disguised as private dwellings, their show windows fashioned as oriels, neatly sodded yards, set with flower beds and planted with evergreens, before them.

Mayor Wilcox occupied a villa in Edgemere Road, a great, rambling house of the half-timbered English style with Romantic chimneys, stuccoed walls and many low, broad windows. A smug, well-kept formal garden, fenced in by neatly trimmed hedges of box and privet, was in front; at the side was a pergola and rose garden where marble statues, fountains and a lily-pond stood in incongruous contrast to the Elizabethan house and Victorian front-garden.

"I understand you've had some of the details of the case already from O'Toole, Doctor de Grandin," Mayor Wilcox said when we had been escorted to his study at the rear of the villa's wide central hall.

The Frenchman inclined his head. "Quite so," he answered. "I was most solemnly assured you were suffering from diabolic visitation, *Monsieur le Maire.*"

Wilcox laughed shortly, mirthlessly. "I'm not so sure he's wrong," he answered.

"Eh, you have some reason to believe——" de Grandin started, then broke off questioningly.

The mayor looked from one of us to the other with a sort of shamefaced ex-

pression. "It's really very odd," he returned at length. "Folloilott rather inclines to the diabolical theory, too, but he's so mediæval-minded, anyway, that——"

"And this Monsieur Fol—this Monsieur with the funny name, who is he, if you please?"

"Our rector—the priest in charge of St. Michael and All Angels'; queer sort of chap; modern and all that, you know, but believes in all sorts of supernatural nonsense, and——"

"One little moment, if you please," de Grandin interrupted. "Let us hear the reasons for the good man's assumptions, if you will. Me, I know the by-ways of ghostland as I know my own pocket, and I solemnly assure you there is no such thing as the supernatural. There is undoubtedly the superphysical; there is also that class of natural phenomena which we do not understand; but the supernatural? *Non,* it is not so."

Mayor Wilcox, who was bald to the ears and affected a pointed beard and curling mustache which gave him a Shakespearian appearance, glanced sharply at the Frenchman, as though in doubt of his sincerity, then, as he met the earnest gaze of the small, blue eyes, responded with a shrug:

"It was the Michael which started him. Our church, you know, is largely constructed from bits of ruined abbeys brought from England. The font is Sixteenth Century, the altar even earlier, and some of the carvings date back to pre-Tudor times. The name-saint, the Archangel Michael, is represented by a particularly fine bit of work showing the Champion of Heaven overcoming the Fiend and binding him in chains. It was in first-rate shape despite its age when we received it, and every precaution was taken when we set it over the church porch. But just before the first of these mysterious killings took place the stone fetter which bound the Devil became broken in some way. Folloilott was the first to notice it, and directed my attention to the missing links. He seemed in a dreadful state of funk when he told us the bits of missing stone were nowhere to be found.

" 'Well, we'll have a stone-cutter over and have new ones carved,' I told him, but it seemed that wouldn't do at all. Unless the identical links which were missing could be found and reset right away, something terrible would descend on the community, he assured me. I'd have laughed at him, but he was so earnest about it any one could see he was sincere.

" 'I tell you, Wilcox,' he said, 'those links are symbolical. The Archfiend is unchained upon the earth, and dreadful things will come to us unless we can confine him in those sacred fetters right away!' You have to know Folloilott to understand the impressive way he said it. Why, I almost believed it, myself, he was so serious about it all.

"Well, the upshot of it all was we searched the churchyard and all the ground around, but couldn't find a single trace of those stone links. Next night the boot— the Scarsci man was killed in the way O'Toole told you, and since that time we've had two other inexplicable murders.

"No one can offer any explanation, and the detectives we hired were as much at sea as any of us. What do *you* think of it, sir?"

"U'm," de Grandin took his narrow chin between a thoughtful thumb and finger and pinched it till the dimple in its tip deepened to a cleft. "I think we should do well to see this statue of St. Michael and also the so estimable clergy-

man with the unpronounceable name. Can this be done at once?"

Wilcox consulted his watch. "Yes," he answered. "Folloilott says evensong about this time every day, rain, shine or measles. We'll be in time to see him if we step over to the church right away."

WINTER was dying hard. The late afternoon was bitter for so late in March. A leaden sky, piled high with asphalt-colored clouds, held a menace of snow, and along the walks curled yellow leaves from the wayside trees scuttered, and paused and scuttered on again as though they fled in hobbled fear from the wind that came hallooing from the north.

Chimes were playing softly in the square bell-tower of the church as we approached, their vibrant notes scarce audible against the wind's wild shouting:

Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide. . . .

A look of almost ineffable sadness swept across de Grandin's features, swift as the passing of a thought. "Have her ever in Thy gracious keeping, Lord!" he murmured, and signed the cross before his face, so quickly one might have thought him stroking his mustache.

"There's Folloilott, now!" Wilcox exclaimed. "I say, Mr. Folloilott, here——"

A tall young man in shovel hat and Inverness coat strode quickly across the patch of lawn separating the church from the brick-and-sandstone rectory. If he heard the mayor's greeting above the wind he gave no sign as he thrust the nail-studded door of the vestry aside and entered the sacred edifice.

"Humph, he's a sacerdotal fool!" our companion exclaimed half angrily. "You might as well try to get a number on a broken telephone as attract his attention when he's about his parish duties."

"U'm?" de Grandin murmured. "The one-tracked mind, as you call him in American, *hein?* And this St. Michael of whom you spoke, where is he, if you please?"

"There," Wilcox answered, pointing his blackthorn stick to a sculptured group set in the wall above the pentice.

The group, cut in high relief upon a plinth of stone, represented the Archangel, accoutered in cuirass and greaves, erect above the fallen demon, one foot upon his adversary's throat, his lance poised for a thrust in his right hand, the left holding a chain which was made fast to manacles latched around the fiend's wrists. The whole thing, rather crudely carved, had an appearance of immense age, and even from our point of view, some forty feet away, we could see that several links of the chain, as well as the bracelets binding the Devil's hands, had weathered and chipped away.

"And *Monsieur l'Abbé* insists this has connection with these so strange deaths?" the Frenchman asked musingly.

"He affects to believe so; yes," Wilcox answered, impatience in his voice.

"*Eh bien,* in former times men have believed in stranger ' ings," de Grandin returned. "Come, let us go in; I would observe him more closely, if you please."

Like too many churches, St. Michael and All Angels' did not boast impressive congregations at ordinary services. A verger in a black-serge robe, three or four elderly and patently virgin ladies in expensive but frumpish costumes and a young and slender girl almost nun-like in her subdued gray coat and hat were the sole attendants besides ourselves.

The organ prelude finished as we found seats in a forward pew, and the Reverend Mr. Folloilott entered from the vestry, genuflected to the altar and began to intone the service. Rather to my surprize, he chose the long, or Nicene Creed, in

preference to the shorter one usually recited at the evening service, and at the words, "and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost," his genuflection was so profound that it was almost a prostration.

Immediately following the collect for peace he descended from the chancel to the body of the church and began the office of general supplication.

It was chilly to the point of frostiness in the church, but perspiration streaked the cleric's face as in a voice vibrant with intense emotion he cantillated the entreaty:

> O holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God; have mercy upon us miserable sinners. . . .

From our seats in the transept we were almost abreast of the priest as he knelt at the litany desk, and I caught de Grandin studying him covertly while the interminable office was recited. Mr. Folloilott's face was cameo-sharp in profile, pale, but not with poor health; lean rather than thin, with a high, narrow brow, deep-set, almost piercingly clear eyes of gray, high-bridged, prominent nose and long, pointed chin. The mouth was large, but thin-lipped, and the hair which grew well forward at the temples intensely black. A rather strong, intelligent face, I thought, but one marked by asceticism, the face of one who might be either unflinching martyr or relentless inquisitor, as occasion might direct.

"No use trying to see him now," Wilcox told us when benediction was pronounced and the congregation rose from their knees after a respectful interval. "He'll be about his private devotions for the next half-hour, and—ah, by George, I have it! I'm having another friend for dinner tonight: what d'ye say we have Folloilott and Janet in as well? You'll have all the chance you want to talk with him."

"Excellent," de Grandin acquiesced. "And who is Janet, may one ask? Madame Fol—the reverend gentleman's wife?"

"Lord, no!" the mayor responded. "Folloilott's a dedicated celibate. Janet's his ward."

"Ah?" the Frenchman answered with a barely perceptible rising inflection. I drove my elbow in his ribs lest he say more. The frank expressions of de Grandin's thoughts were not always acceptable to American ears, as I well knew from certain contretemps in which he had involved me in the past.

3

EIGHT of us gathered at the Jacobean oak table in Mr. Wilcox's dining-room that evening: the mayor and his wife, a slender, dark young man of scholarly appearance with refined, Semitic features, George, Wilcox's son, recently admitted to the bar and his father's partner in practise, the Reverend Basil Folloilott and his ward, Janet Payne, de Grandin and I. The meal was good, though simple: clear soup, fried sole, a saddle of Canada hare, salad and an ice; white wine with the fish, claret with the roast.

De Grandin studied each of the guests with his quick, stock-taking glance, but Janet excited my curiosity most of all. She was slight and unmistakably attractive, but despite her smooth and fresh-colored complexion she somehow conveyed an impression of colorlessness. Her long, fair hair was simply arranged in a figure 8 knot at the nape of her neck; her large, blue, heavy-lidded eyes seemed to convey nothing but disinterested weariness. Her lips were a thought too full for beauty, but she had a sweet, rather pathetic smile, and she smiled often but talked rarely. "H'm," I wondered professionally, "is she anemic, or recovering from an illness?"

The sound of Wilcox's voice broke through my revery: "I saw Withers' executors today, Mr. Silverstein," he told the young Jewish gentleman, "and I don't think there's much doubt that they'll renew the loan."

To us he added in explanation, "Mr. Silverstein is Rabbi of the Congregation Beth Israel. Withers held a mortgage on their temple and was pressing them for payment in full when he was—when he died. The executors seem more leniently inclined."

A sharp kick on my shin made me wince with pain, but before I could cry out, de Grandin's hand was pressing mine and his eyes beckoning my attention to the clergyman across the table. The reverend gentleman's face had gone an almost sickly gray, and an expression of something like consternation was on his features.

I was about to ask if I could be of service when our hostess rose, and with her Janet went into the drawing-room. Evidently the custom of leaving the gentlemen at table with their cigars still obtained in Wilcox's house. For just an instant as she passed the girl's glance rested on young Wilcox, and in it was tenderness and such yearning that I almost cried aloud, for it was like the look of a pauper's child before a toyshop window at Christmas time.

De Grandin noted the look, too. *"Tiens, Monsieur l'Abbé,"* he said genially as he lighted his cigar, "unless I greatly miss my guess, you shall soon celebrate a most joyous ceremony."

The clergyman looked puzzled. "How do you mean?" he asked.

"Why, when Mademoiselle Jeannette marries with Monsieur Georges, to be sure, you will most certainly perform the cere——"

The other cut him off. "Janet has no place for earthly love in her life," he answered. "Hers is one of those devoted souls which long for sweet communion with the Heavenly Bridegroom. As soon as she has come of age she will become a postulate in the order of the Resurrection. All plans are made; it is her life's vocation. She has been trained to look for nothing else since she was a little girl."

De Grandin shot a doubtful, questioning glance at me, and I nodded confirmation. St. Chrystosom's, where I had served as vestryman for nearly thirty years, was "moderate," being neither Methodistically "low" nor ritualistically "high," but in a vague way I knew the ritualistic branch of the Episcopal Church supported monastic and conventual orders with discipline and rules as strict as any sponsored by the Greek and Latin churches, especially women's orders, where the members took their vows for life and lived as closely cloistered as mediæval nuns.

An awkward pause ensued. De Grandin tweaked the points of his mustache and seemed meditating a reply, and knowing him as I did, my teeth were on edge with apprehension, but Wilcox saved the situation. "I was telling Doctor de Grandin your theory of the strange deaths—how the breaking of the fetter in St. Michael's hand might be responsible," he told the clergyman.

Young Rabbi Silverstein looked puzzled. "Surely, you're not serious, Mr. Folloilott?" he asked. "You can't mean you believe there's some connection between a graven image and these murders. Why, it's——"

Folloilott rose, his face drawn and working with half-suppressed emotion. "To one of *your* religion, sir," he answered cuttingly, "the statue of the Archangel Michael may be a 'graven image';

to us it is a holy thing, endued with heavenly powers. As for these 'murders,' as you call them, I am convinced no earthly agency has anything to do with them; no human hand struck the blows which rid the world of those moral lepers. They are unquestionably the visitations of an outraged Heaven upon contemners of Divine authority. The call to repentance has gone forth, even as it did in the days of the Patriarch Noah. Heaven is outraged at the iniquity of man, and the Dark Angel of Death is abroad; you may almost hear the beating of his dreadful sable wings. There is no one as when the first-born was slain of old, to sprinkle blood upon the lintels of our doors that he may spare us and pass on. Repentance is the only way to safety. No mortal man can stay his flight, no mortal dare impede him in his awful errand!"

"*Tiens,* there you do make the great mistake, *Monsieur,*" de Grandin answered with one of his quick, elfin grins. "I dare do so. The law forbids such killings, and be he angel or devil, he who has committed them must answer to the law. Furthermore, which is of more immediate importance, he must answer to Jules de Grandin. Certainly; of course."

"*You?*" the tall cleric looked down at the little Frenchman incredulously.

"Even as you say, *Monsieur l'Abbé.*"

For a moment they faced each other across the table, Folloilott's piercing gaze seeking to beat down de Grandin's level stare, and failing as the wind may fail to move a firmly planted rock. At length:

"You take grave risks lightly, sir," the clergyman admonished.

"It is a habit of long standing, *Monsieur,*" de Grandin answered in a toneless, level voice. His little, round blue eyes set in a fixed, unwinking stare against the other's burning gaze.

The clergyman excused himself a short while afterward, and we were left alone before the fire.

"I think your rector needs a rest," I told the mayor. "His nerves are all unstrung from overwork, I'd say. Once or twice I fancied he was on the verge of a breakdown this evening."

"He *did* look rather seedy," Wilcox admitted. "Guess we'll have to send him off to Switzerland again this summer. He's a great mountain-climber, you know; quite a hunter, too. Some years ago he went exploring in the Andes and brought back some rare specimens. They say he's one of the few men who ever succeeded in bringing down a condor in full flight."

De Grandin glanced up sharply. "A condor, did you say, *Monsieur*—one of those great Andean vultures?" he demanded.

"Yes," Wilcox answered. "He risked his life to do it; but he shot one down from an eminence of several thousand feet. Got two of 'em, in fact, but one was lost. The other's stuffed and mounted in the museum at Harrisonville."

"A condor?" murmured Jules de Grandin musingly. "He shot a condor, this one, and——"

Furious knocking at the door, followed by the tread of heavy boots in the tiled passage cut him short. "Doctor de Grandin, sor," Chief O'Toole burst into the dining-room, amazement and something strangely like terror in his florid face, "there's another one been kilt. We just got th' word!"

"*Mille tonnerres*—another? Beneath our very noses?" The Frenchman leaped from his seat as a bounced ball rises in the air, and fairly rushed toward the coat closet where his outdoor wraps were hung. "Come, Friend Trowbridge, rush, hasten; fly!" he bade me. To O'Toole:

"Lead on, *mon chef,* we follow close behind!"

" 'Tis Misther Bostwick, this time, sor," the chief confided as we walked along the frosty street. "Not five minutes ago I took a call at headquarters, an', 'Is this th' chief o' police?' a lady asks, all scared and trembly-like.

" 'It is,' says I, 'an' what can I be doin' fer ye, Miss?'

" 'Come over to Misther Bostwick's, if yez please,' she tells me. 'Sumpin terrible has happened!'

"So over to Misther Bostwick's house I goes, an' she warn't exaggeratin' none, sor, I'll say that fer her. Th' place is a holy wreck, an' pore Bostwick's a-settin' there in his livin'-room wid th' back mashed out o' his head an' th' mark o' th' Divil on his brow."

De Grandin took a few steps in thoughtful silence; then: "And what was Monsieur Bostwick's besetting sin, *mon chef?"* he asked.

"Eh?"

"What was it this one did which might offend a straight-laced moralist?"

O'Toole returned a short, hard laugh. "How'd ye guess it, sor?" he asked.

"Name of an old and thoroughly decaying cheese—*I* ask *you,* not you me!" the Frenchman almost shouted.

"Well, sor, Norfolk Downs ain't like some places; we don't go pokin' too much into th' private life o' th' citizens as pays our salaries, an'——"

"*A bas* the explanations and apologies! What was it this one did, I ask to know!"

"Well, sor, if ye must know, they do say as how he wuz uncommon fond o' th' ladies. Time afther time I seen th' pretty ladies shteppin' out o' their cars before his door, an' late o' nights th' light wuz goin' in his house. Yet he were a bachelor, sor, an' his bootlegger's bill must 'a' been tremenjous, judgin' be th' empty bottles that wuz carted from his place. I've heard tell as how some o' his little playmates had husbands o' their own, too, but as 'twas all done quiet an' orderly-like, I never interfered, an'——"

"No matter, one understands," de Grandin cut him short. "Are we arrived?"

4

WE WERE. Ablaze with lights, the big, brick house in which Theodore Bostwick had lived his gay and not particularly righteous life stood before us, a uniformed policeman at the door, another waiting in the hall. Crouched on a settle by the fire, shaking with sobs and plainly in an agony of fear, a very pretty little lady in a very pretty pajama ensemble raised a tear-stained face to us.

"Oh, don't—please don't let them give my name to the papers!" she besought as de Grandin paused before her.

"Softly, *Mademoiselle,"* he soothed, tactfully ignoring the platinum-and-diamond band encircling the third finger of her left hand. "We do but seek the facts. Where were you when it happened, if you please?"

"I—I'd come downstairs to get some ice," the little woman answered, dabbing at her eyes with a wisp of rose-colored cambric. "Ted—Mr. Bostwick, wanted some ice for the cocktails, and I said I'd come down and get it from the Frigidaire, and——" She paused and shivered as though a chill had laid its icy finger on her, despite the superheated room.

"Yes, *Mademoiselle,* and——" de Grandin prompted softly.

"I heard Ted call out once—I couldn't understand him, and called back, 'What?' and then there was a dreadful clatter in the big room upstairs, as if everything were being smashed, and I was frightened.

"I waited for a moment, then went upstairs, and—oh, it was dreadful!"

"*Précisément,* one understands as much; but what was it you saw?"

"You'll see it for yourself, when you go up. Ted was sitting there—looking straight at me—and everything around him was all broken. I took one look at him and turned to run, but on the steps I must have fainted, for I fell, and when I came to I was lying at the bottom of the stairs, and——"

"What did you do next?" he asked as she paused again.

"I—I fainted."

"*Morbleu,* again?"

"Yes, again!" something half stubborn, half hysterical was in her answer. "I was going to the telephone to call the officers when I chanced to glance up, and there——" Once more her voice trailed off to nothingness, and the color drained from her pink cheeks, leaving them ghastly-white beneath the rouge.

The little Frenchman looked at her, compassion in his gaze. "What was it that you saw, *ma pauvre?*" he asked gently.

"A—a face, sir. It looked at me through the window for just an instant, but I'll not forget it if I live to be a hundred. There was nothing above it, nothing below it—it seemed to hang there, like the head of a decapitated man suspended in the air—and it *glared* at me. It was long—twice as big as any face I've ever seen—and a sort of awful grayish color—like the underside of a toad!—and great tusks protruded from its mouth. The eyes were green and glowing with some dreadful light, and there were horns growing from the forehead. I tell you there *were!*" She paused a moment while she fought for breath; then, very softly: "It was the Devil!"

"*Eh bien, Mademoiselle,* this is of interest, certainly. And then, if you please——"

"Then I fainted again. I don't know how long I lay on the floor, but as soon as I came to I called police headquarters."

De Grandin turned to Chief O'Toole. "You came at once?" he asked.

"Yes, sor."

"Who came with you?"

"Kelley an' Shea, sor."

"*Très bien.* You searched the place inside and out? What of the doors and windows?"

"Locked, sor; locked tight as wax. Th' little lady here let us in, afther askin' who we wuz, an' we heard her throw th' lock an' draw th' inside bolt an' chain-fastener. Th' back door wuz tight locked, an' every windy in th' place but one wuz closed an' latched. Th' big windy in th' livin'-room upstairs wuz shut, but not latched, sor."

"Very good. And that window there—the one through which *Mademoiselle* declares she saw the face—what of it?"

"It's more'n ten foot from th' ground, sor, an' fixed—th' frame's set fast in th' jamb, so's it can't be opened a-tall."

"Very good. Let us ascend and see what we shall see above."

THE upstairs living-room of Bostwick's house was a blaze of light, for Chief O'Toole and his aides had turned on every available bulb when they made their preliminary search.

"*Ah?*" de Grandin murmured softly as we paused upon the threshold "*A-ah?*"

Facing us through the doorway which gave upon the upper hall, his chin sunk on his breast, hands clenched into rigid fists upon the arms of his chair, a man sat staring endlessly at nothing with sightless, film-glazed eyes. He had been in early middle life—forty-five, perhaps, possibly fifty years old—with profuse,

gray-streaked hair and a vandyke beard in which the brown was thickly flecked with gray. In life his face must have been florid, but now it shone under the glowing electric bulbs with the ash-gray pallor which belongs only to death, his parted lips almost as blanched as his cheeks, little gouts of perspiration, glistening like beads of oil, dewing his high, white forehead.

The room behind him was a welter of confusion. Chairs were overturned, even broken, the contents of the center table—bits of expensive bric-à-brac and objects of *vertu*—were strewn upon the rich Turkey carpet, the pieces of an almost priceless K'angshi vase lay scattered in one corner.

De Grandin advanced and slowly surveyed the corpse, walking round it, observing it from every side. A little to the left and above the right ear a deep, wedge-shaped depression showed in the skull, blood, a little ruptured brain-substance and serous cerebrospinal fluid escaping from the wound. The Frenchman looked at me with elevated brows and nodded questioningly. I nodded back. Death must have been instantaneous.

"D'ye see it, sor?" O'Toole demanded in an awed whisper, pointing to the dead man's forehead.

There was no denying it. Impressed upon the flesh, as though stamped there with almost crushing force, was the bifurcated imprint of *a giant goat's hoof*.

"They must 'a' had th' divil of a fight," O'Toole opined as he surveyed the devastated room.

De Grandin looked about him carefully. "It seems so," he agreed, "but why the Evil One should vent his wrath upon the poor man's chattels when he had killed the owner gives one to wonder *n'est-ce-pas?*"

"An'—an' d'ye notice th' *shmell*, sor?" O'Toole added diffidently.

De Grandin's narrow nostrils contracted and expanded nervously as he sniffed the air. I, too, inhaled, and down the back of my neck and through my cheeks ran tiny ripples of horror-chills. There was no mistaking it—trust one who'd served a term as city health officer to know! Faint, but clearly perceptible, there was the pungent, acrid *scent of burning sulfur* in the room.

De Grandin's small blue eyes were very round and almost totally expressionless as he looked from O'Toole to me and back again. At length: *"Oui-da,"* he agreed, *"c'est le soufre, vraiment.* No matter, we have other things to do than inhale silly scents."

"But, sor——" O'Toole began.

"But be grilled upon the grates of hell, *mon vieux*. What make you of this?" he pointed to a splash of blood, roughly circular in shape, and some four or five inches in diameter, which disfigured the carpet almost underneath the window.

"Huh? Why that's where he bled, sor," the Irishman replied, after a moment's study of the ruddy spot.

"Exactement, my friend—where he bled. Now, consider this——" Wheeling, he led us back to the seated body, and pointed in turn to the dead man's collar and the back of the chair. Scarcely a bloodstain showed on them.

"I don't think I quite git ye, sor," the chief admitted after a long scrutiny.

"Ah bah, my friend, are you then blind?" the Frenchman asked him almost angrily. "Consider: One window was open, or unlatched, at least; and by that window we find blood. It is almost the only blood we find. But Monsieur Bostwick is seated in his chair, almost as though awaiting visitors. Is that the way a man would be if he had died in fight?"

"Well, sor"—O'Toole put up a hand to scratch his head—"he *might* 'a' staggered to that chair an' died there, afther he'd been struck——"

"Name of a blue rat, my friend, how can you say so?" de Grandin interrupted. "The blow which killed this poor one caused instant death. Doctor Trowbridge will bear me out in that. No human man could live three seconds following such a blow. Besides, if the man had staggered across the room, there would be blood upon the floor if he leant forward as he crawled toward the chair, or blood upon his collar if he stood upright; yet we see none save in this single spot. That is the spot where he bled, my friend. He was undoubtlessly struck dead close by the window, then carried to that chair and placed there with both feet flat upon the floor, and hands composed upon the arms, and then the one who killed him smashed the furniture to bits. The testimony of the room can be interpreted no other way."

The Irishman glanced round the room, then at the dead man. "Howly Mither," he exclaimed at length, "I'm damned if I don't think th' dominie is right, sor. It *were* th' Divil as done this thing. No mortal man could fly up to that windy an' kill th' pore felly in that way!" He paused to bless himself, then: "Let's be goin', sor. There's no good comin' from our stayin' here!"

De Grandin nodded in agreement. Then, as we reached the lower hall: "We shall not need the pretty lady's testimony, Chief. I believe her story absolutely—she was too frightened to be lying—and nothing she can tell us will throw light upon the case. Meantime, if you will have a strict watch kept, and see that no one comes or goes, except the undertaker's men when they come for the body, I shall be greatly in your debt."

To the trembling, half-hysterical girl he announced: "You are free to go at will, *petite,* and were I you, I should not long remain here; one never knows who may come, and having come, depart and retail gossip."

"You mean I may go—now?" she asked in incredulous delight.

"Perfectly, my little cabbage, to go and sin—with more discretion in the future."

5

PALE daylight had scarcely dawned when de Grandin nudged and kicked me into wakefulness. "Have you forgotten that we inspect Monsieur Bostwick's house today?" he asked reproachfully. "Come, my friend, rush, hasten, make the hurry; we have much to do and I would be about it while there are not too many to observe our actions."

Our hasty toilets made and a call put through to ask O'Toole to meet us, we hurried to the house of death, and while we waited for the chief, de Grandin made a careful circuit of the place. "This is undoubtlessly the window where the little lady with the fragile morals saw the evil face look through," he mused, pausing under the big chimney which reared itself along the southern wall.

"Yes," I agreed, "and it's directly underneath the window of the room where Bostwick's body was found, too; the window Chief O'Toole said was closed but unlocked."

"Excellent," he clapped his hands, as though applauding at a play. "I shall make something of you yet, Friend Trowbridge. You have right, now—*ah? Que diable?*"

He broke off sharply, crouched suddenly upon the frozen lawn and crept forward quickly, as though intent upon taking something by surprize. "You see?" he asked in a tense whisper.

A tiny coppice of dwarf spruce was planted in the angle of the chimney and the house-wall, and as he pointed I saw that one or two small branches were freshly broken, the tender wood showing white and pallid through the ruptured bark.

Following him, I saw him part the lower boughs, examine the frosty ground with his nose almost thrust into it, then saw him straighten like a coiled spring suddenly released from tension. "Behold!" he bade me, seizing my wrist and dragging me forward. Upon the hard earth showed a tiny stain, a dull, brown-colored stain, no larger than a split bean, but unmistakable. Blood!

"How——" I began, but:

"And look at this—ten thousand small blue devils!—look at this, my friend, and tell me what it is you see!" he ordered sharply. Nearer the house, where the chimney's warmth had kept the frost from hardening the earth to any great extent, there showed two prints—footprints—but such footprints!

One was obviously human, a long and slimly aristocratic foot, shod with a moccasin or some sort of soft shoe, for there was no well-defined impression of a built-up heel. But close beside it, so placed it must have been left by the same person, was the clear-cut, unmistakable impression of a hoof—*a cloven hoof*—as though an ox or giant goat had stamped there.

"Well!" I exclaimed, then paused for very want of words in which to frame my reeling thoughts.

"Non," he denied emphatically. "It is most unwell, Friend Trowbridge. It is diabolical, no less. *Tout la même"*—he raised his narrow shoulders in a shrug—"I shall not be dissuaded. Though Satan's self has done these things, I'll not desist until I have him clapped in jail, my friend. Consider, has not the mayor of Norfolk Downs retained me for that purpose? Come, let us go. I see the good O'Toole approaching, and he will surely be made ill if he should see this thing."

Once more we searched the house as carefully as a jeweler might search a gem for hidden flaws, but nowhere was there any clue to help us. At length: "We must look at the roof," de Grandin said. "It may be we shall find some little, so small thing to aid us there; the good God knows we have not found it here."

"Arra, Doctor de Grandin, sor, 'tain't Christmastime fer nigh another year," O'Toole objected.

"Eh, what is it that you tell me—*noël?"* the Frenchman answered sharply.

"Why, sor, ye must be afther thinkin' it wuz Santy Claus as did in Misther Bostwick, instead o'—instead o' Satan." He looked quickly round, as though he feared some hidden listener, then signed himself furtively with the cross.

De Grandin grinned acknowledgment of the sally, but led the way uncompromisingly to the attic from which a trapdoor let upon the steep, tiled roof. Pausing for a moment to survey the serrated rows of semi-cylindrical tiles with which the housetop was covered, he threw a leg over the ridgepole and began slowly working his way toward the chimney. Early as it was, several small boys loitering in the street, the policeman on guard outside the house and a dog of highly doubtful ancestry were on hand to witness his aerial performance, and as he reached the chimney and clung to it, both arms encircling the tall terra-cotta pot with which the flue was capped, we caught a flash of black and saw the Reverend Basil Folloilott pause in a rapid walk and gaze up wonderingly.

De Grandin hugged the chimney some three minutes, crooked his knee across the angle of the roof and leant as far

downward as was possible, examining the glazed, round tiles, then slowly hitched himself back to the trap-door where O'Toole and I were waiting.

"Find anythin', sor?" the chief inquired good-humoredly.

"Enough to justify the risk of breaking the most valuable neck which I possess," the Frenchman answered with a smile. "*Parbleu,* enough to give one food for speculation, too, I am inclined to think!"

"What wuz it?"

The Frenchman opened his hand, and in the palm of his gray glove we saw a slim, dark object resting, a little wisp of horsehair, I supposed.

"What——" O'Toole began, but:

"No whats, my friend, no whys, not even any wherefores, if you please," the other cut him short. "Me, I shall cogitate upon this matter—this and some others. Anon I may announce the goal to which my thoughts have led. Meantime I am too well aware that it is villainously cold up here and I am most tremendously in need of food."

BREAKFAST was laid in the pleasant room adjoining Wilcox's kitchen when we returned, and de Grandin did full justice to the meal. He was commencing his fifth cup of well-creamed coffee when a maid announced the Reverend Basil Folloilott.

Despite the coldness of the day, the clergyman's pale face was even paler than its usual wont as he came into the breakfast room, still a little short of breath from rapid walking. "Dreadful news of Mr. Bostwick," he announced as he greeted us reservedly. "The poor unfortunate, cut off in deadly sin—if only he had seen the light in time——"

"Who says he was cut off in sin, *Monsieur?*" de Grandin broke in suddenly.

"I do," the clergyman's pale lips snapped shut upon the words. "I *know* he was. Time after time, night after night, I saw his paramours arriving at his door as I watched from my study window, and I went to him with messages of peace—redemption and release through hearty and unfeigned repentance. But he——"

"*Eh bien, Monsieur,* one can guess without great difficulty what he said to you," the Frenchman answered with a laugh.

"One can," the cleric answered hotly. "He told me to go to the devil—me, the messenger of holiness. There was no hope for such as he. He led a life of sin; in sin he died, and God can find no pity for a wretch like him. The Lord Himself——"

"It seems I have read somewhere of a lady whose behavior was not all a lady's conduct ought to be, yet who was counted of some worth in later days," de Grandin interrupted softly.

An ugly sneer gathered at the corners of Folloilott's mouth. "Indeed?" he asked sarcastically. "She was a countrywoman of yours, no doubt, Monsieur de Grandin?"

"No-o," the Frenchman answered slowly, while a malicious twinkle flickered in his eyes. "She was from Magdala—the Scriptures call her Mary Magdalene, and somewhere I have heard the Blessed Master did not bar her out of Paradise, although her life had been at least as bad as that of Monsieur Bostwick."

"I SAY, de Grandin, you seem to take delight in getting a rise out of Folloilott," Wilcox accused when the clergyman had taken a hasty and offended leave.

The almost boorish manner of the preacher puzzled me. "Perhaps the man's a pious hypocrite," I hazarded, but:

"*Mais non,*" denied the Frenchman.

"Pious he is, I freely grant—but a hypocrite? No, it is not so. He is in deadly earnest, that one. How much his deadliness exceeds his earnestness I should not care to guess, but——" He lapsed into a moody silence.

"What d'ye mean?" I urged. "Are you implying that——"

"*Ah bah,* I did but let my wits go wool-gathering—there is a black dog running through my brain, Friend Trowbridge," he apologized. "Forget what I have said; I was conversing through the hat, as you so drolly say."

6

DE GRANDIN was busy all that day, making a hasty trip to the city, returning for luncheon, then dashing off to consult Chief O'Toole till nearly dinner time.

He kept the table in an uproar with his witty sallies throughout the meal, and when dessert was served young George Wilcox pulled a long face. "I'd rather sit right here and talk with you than go out tonight, Doctor de Grandin," he declared, "but——"

"*Ah-ha; ah-ha-ha*—I see him!" laughed de Grandin. "I too was young upon a time, my friend. I know the ecstasy of the little hand's soft pressure, the holy magic which can be found within the loved one's glance. Go to her with speed, *mon vieux;* you were not half a man if you delayed your tryst to talk with such a silly one as Jules de Grandin. Hold her hand gently, *mon brave,* it is a fragile thing, I make no doubt."

The boy retreated with a sheepish grin and heightened color.

"I wish George wouldn't see her," Mrs. Wilcox sighed plaintively. "They're terribly in love, of course, but Mr. Folloilott won't hear of it—he's mapped the poor girl's life for her, you know, and next May she starts on her novitiate at Carlinville. I suppose he knows best, he's such a thoroughly *good* man, but——" She broke off with another sigh, as though she felt herself a heretic for questioning the rector's wisdom.

We played bridge after dinner, but de Grandin's mind was not upon the game. He lost consistently, and shortly after ten o'clock excused himself on the plea he had a busy day before him, paid his losses and furtively beckoned me to join him in our room.

"Friend Trowbridge," he informed me earnestly, "we must do something for those children. It is an outrage two young hearts should thus be pried apart. You saw the look she gave him yesternight at table—a look in which her very heart beat for release against the fetters of her eyes. You saw the look on young *Monsieur's* face this evening. Our business is to help them to each other."

"Our business is to find out who's perpetrating these murders—if it's not the Devil himself, as O'Toole and Folloilott seem to think," I broke in roughly. "This boy-and-girl affair's just puppy love. They may think their hearts are broken, but——"

"*Zut,* who says it?" he cried sharply. "I tell you, good Friend Trowbridge, a man's heart breaks but once, and then it is forever. *Misère de Dieu,* do I not know it? As for these killings, my friend, I am the wiser, though not sadder, man tonight. Attend me: At Harrisonville I had the tiny flecks of hard-dried liquid which we found outside Monsieur Bostwick's window analyzed. They were, as I suspected, blood—human blood. Also, while he was absent on some parish duty, I did feloniously and most unlawfully insert myself into the reverend gentleman's study, and made a careful search. Behold what I have found——" From the pocket

of his dinner coat he took several small, twisted things, grayish, curved objects which looked for all the world like sections of a hard, gray doughnut.

"What the deuce——" I began, but he stopped me with a grin.

"Chains, my friend—chains of the devil, no less. The mystery of the holy Michael's tether for the Devil is explained. I would not go so far as to declare that the good cleric broke that carven chain, then spread the story of impending doom about; but unquestionably he had possession of the missing links, even while he helped search for them in places where he knew that they were not. What do you make of that?"

"Why——" I looked at him in open-mouthed amazement. "Why——"

"Exactly, precisely; quite so. It is our task to find out why, and unless I am more mistaken than I think I am, we shall know something ere we see another morning."

Yawning, he stripped off his jacket and waistcoat, pulled his pajama coat on above his shirt, and proceeded to snap on every available bulb in the room. Once more he yawned prodigiously, went to the window and unbarred it, flinging wide the casement and spreading wide his arms in a tremendous stretch. I yawned in sympathy as he stood there with jaws agape, the personification of a man who can withstand the urge to sleep no longer.

A moment he stood thus, then, snapping off the light, leaped quickly in the bed and pulled the comforter about his neck.

"Good Lord, you're not going to sleep *that* way, are you?" I asked, amazed.

"*Pardieu,* I shall not sleep at all, my friend!" he answered in a whisper. "And you will please have the goodness not to shout. Climb into bed if you desire, and pull the blankets over you, but do not sleep; we shall have need of wakefulness before the night is done, I damn think."

Despite his admonition, I dropped off. The respite from the cares of my practise and the dull evening at cards combined to wear down my will to stay awake. How long I slept I do not know, but something—that odd sixth sense which rouses sleeping cats, dogs and physicians—brought me full-conscious from the fairyland of dreams. No time was needed to orient myself; my eyes turned unbidden to the window which de Grandin had left open.

The steady southwest wind had chased the clouds before it, and the moonlight fell as bright, almost, as midday on the planted lawn outside. Bars of the silvery luminance struck through the open casement and lay along the floor, as bright and unobscured as—stay, there was a shadow blotting out the moonlight, something was moving very slowly, soundlessly, outside the window.

I strained my eyes to pierce the intervening gloom, then sat bolt-upright, horror gripping at my throat, chill, grisly fear dragging at my scalp.

Across the eighteen-inch-wide sill it came, as quiet as a creeping snake; a great, black thing, the moonlight glinting evilly on the polished scales which overlaid its form. From its shoulders, right and left, spread great, black wings, gleaming with a sort of horrid, half-dulled luster, and as they grasped the window-sill I caught a glimpse of long, curved talons, pitiless as those of any vulture, but larger and more cruel by far than those of any bird.

But awful as the dread form was, the countenance was more so. A ghastly sort of white it was, not white as snow or polished bone is white, not white as death's pale visage may be white, but a leprous, unclean white, the sort of pallor

which can not be dissociated from disease, corruption and decay. Through the pale mask of horror looked two brilliant, glaring eyes, like corpse-lights shining through the sockets of a fleshless skull, and from the forehead reared a pair of curving, pointed horns. A dreadful memory rushed across the years, a memory of childish fear which had laid dormant but undead for nearly half a century. With my own eyes I saw in living form the figure of Apollyon out of *Pilgrim's Progress!*

I tried to cry aloud, to warn de Grandin of the visitant's approach, but only a dull, croaking sound, scarce louder than a sigh, escaped my palsied lips.

Low as the utterance was, it seemed to carry to the creeping horror. With a wild, demoniac laugh it launched itself upon the bed where my little friend lay sleeping, and in an instant I heard the sickening impact of a blow—another blow—and then a high, cracked voice crying: "Accursed of God, go now and tell your master who keeps watch and ward upon the earth!"

Weapon I had none, but at the bedside stood a table with a chromium carafe of chilled spring water, and this I hurled with all my might straight at the awful face.

A second marrow-freezing cry went up, and then a flash of blinding light—bright as a summer storm's forked lightning on a dark night—flared in my eyes, and I choked and gasped as strangling fumes of burning sulfur filled my mouth and nostrils.

"De Grandin, oh, de Grandin!" I wailed, leaping from the bed and blundering against furniture as I sought the light. Too well I knew that Jules de Grandin could not hear my voice, already I had seen the effects of such flailing blows as I had heard; the little Frenchman lay upon his bed, his head crushed in, his gallant spirit gone for ever from his slender, gallant body.

"*Tiens,* my friend, you battled him right manfully. I dare assert his belly is most villainously sore where you hit it with the bottle," de Grandin's voice came to me from the farther end of the room, and as my light-burned eyes regained their sight, I saw him crawl forth from behind an overstuffed armchair.

My first impulse was to rush upon him and clasp him in my arms; then sudden hot resentment rose within me. "You were there all the time," I accused. "Suppose it had struck me instead of——"

"Of the pillow which I so artistically arranged within the bed to simulate myself?" he interrupted with an impish grin. "In such a case I should have brought this into play." He waved the heavy French army revolver which he held in his right hand. "I could have dropped him at any time, but I desired to see what he was about. It was a gallant show, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

"But—but was it *really* human?" I demanded, shuddering at the dreadful memory of the thing. "D'ye suppose a bullet *could* have reached it? I could have sworn——"

"Assuredly you could," he acquiesced and chuckled. "So can the good O'Toole, and so can our most reverend friend, the *abbé* with the funny name, but——"

A thunderous knocking at the door broke through his words. "Doctor de Grandin, is everything all right?" Mayor Wilcox called anxiously. "I thought I heard a noise in your room, and—nothing's happened, has it?"

"Not yet," the Frenchman answered coolly. "Nothing of any consequence, *Monsieur le Maire;* but something of importance happens shortly, or Jules de

Grandin will eat turnips for next Christmas dinner."

"That's good," Mayor Wilcox answered. "At first I thought it might be George stumbling over something as he came in, but——"

"Ha? Petit Monsieur Georges—he is still out?" the Frenchman interrupted shrilly.

"Yes, but——"

"Grand Dieu des porcs, grand Dieu des coqs; grand Dieu des artichauts—come, Friend Trowbridge, for your life, for his life, for their lives; we must hasten, rush, fly to warn them of the horror which stalks by night! Oh, make haste, my friend; make haste, I beg of you!"

Wondering, I got into my hat and overcoat while de Grandin thrust the heavy pistol in his outer pocket and beat his hands together as he urged me feverishly to hurry.

"Tell me, *Monsieur,"* he asked the mayor, "where does Monsieur Georges make the assignation with his sweetheart? Not at the rectory, I hope?"

"That's the worst of it," Wilcox answered. "Folloilott's forbidden him the house, so Janet slips out and meets him somewhere and they drive around; I shouldn't be surprized if they were parked along the roadside somewhere; but only Heaven knows where. With all this reckless driving and bootlegging and hijacking going on, I'm in a perfect jitter every night till he gets home, and——"

"Name of a mannerless small blue pig, our task is ten times harder!" the Frenchman interrupted. "Come, Friend Trowbridge, we must search the secret paths, seek out the cars secluded by the roadside and warn them of their peril. *Pardieu,* I should have warned him of it ere he left the house!"

7

THERE was something vaguely sinister in the night as we set out; a chill not wholly due to the shrewd wind which blew in from the meadows was biting at my nerves as we walked quickly down the winding, darkened road. Some half a dozen blocks beyond the house we came on a parked car, but when de Grandin flashed his searchlight toward it the angry question of a strange young man informed us we had failed to find the pair we sought. Nevertheless:

"The thing responsible for the deaths which have terrorized the town is out tonight, my friends," the little Frenchman warned. "We ourselves have seen it but a moment since, and——"

"Then you stay here and see it by yourself, old chap!" the young man bade, as he disengaged himself from the clinging arms of his companion, shot his self-starter and set his car in motion.

Three other amorous couples took to flight as we gave warning, and de Grandin was close upon hysteria when the darting shaft of luminance from his flashlight at last picked out the dark-blue body of young Wilcox's modish roadster. As we crept softly forward we heard a woman's voice, rich, deep contralto, husky with emotion:

"My darling, more to me than this world and the next, it must—it *has* to be—good-bye. There is no way I can avoid it, no other way, my dear. It's fate—the will of God—whatever we may choose to call it, dear; but it has to be. If it were any one else, it might be different, but you know him; you know how much he hates the world and how much such things mean to him. And if it were only that he wanted me to do it, I might defy him—though I never did before. Love might make me brave enough to do it—but it's more than that. I'm vowed and

dedicated, dear; long, long ago I took an oath upon my naked knees to do this thing, and I can not—I *dare* not break it. Oh, my dearest one, why—*why*—did I have to meet you before they had me safely in the sisterhood? I might have been happy, for you can't miss the sunshine if you've always been blind, but now——" She paused, and in a faint glow of the dashboard light we saw her take his face between her hands, draw his head to her and kiss him on the lips.

"Monsieur—Mademoiselle——" the Frenchman started, but never finished speaking.

Out of the blackness of surrounding night, its body but a bare shade lighter than the gloom, dreadful, fleshless head and horrid eyes agleam, emerged the phantom-thing we'd seen a half-hour earlier in our bedroom. The night wind whistled with a kind of hellish glee between the sable pinions of the thing's extended wings, and the gleam of phosphorescence in its hollow, orbless eyeholes was like the staring of a basilisk. I stood immobile, rooted in my tracks, and watched destruction bearing down upon the hapless lovers.

Not so de Grandin. *"Sa-ha, Monsieur l'Assistant du Diable,* it seems we meet again—unhappily for you!" he announced in a deadly, quiet voice, and as he spoke the detonation of his pistol split the quiet night as summer thunder rends a lowering rain-cloud. *Crash—crash!* the pistol roared again; the phantom-thing paused, irresolute as though a wall of hidden steel had suddenly been reared in its path, and as it halted momentarily, the Frenchman fired again, coolly, deliberately, taking careful aim before he squeezed the trigger of his heavy weapon.

A sort of crackling, like the scuttering of dry, dead leaves along the autumn roads, sounded as the fearsome thing bent slowly back, tottered uncertainly a moment, then fell to earth with a sharp, metallic rattle and lay there motionless, its wide, black wings outspread, its scale-clad arms outflung, its legs grotesquely twisted under it.

"Tiens. I did not shoot too soon, it seems," de Grandin told young Wilcox cheerfully as he neared the roadster and smiled upon the startled lovers. "Had I delayed a second longer I damn think that the papers would have told the story of another murder in the morning."

I walked up to the supine monster, a sort of grisly terror tugging at my nerves, even though my reason reassured me it was dead.

The eyeholes in the skull-like face still glared malevolently, but a closer look convinced me that nothing more uncanny than luminous paint was responsible for their sullen gleam.

Half timidly, half curiously, I bent and touched the thing. The face was but a mask of some plaster-like substance, and this was cracked and broken just above the eyes, and through the fissure where de Grandin's ball had gone there came a little stream of blood, dyeing the gray-white surface of the plaster mask a sickening rusty-red. About the body and the limbs was drawn a tightly-fitting suit of tough, black knitted fabric, similar to the costume of an acrobat, and to the cloth was sewn row after row of overlapping metal scales. One foot was clothed in what looked like a heavy stocking of the same material as the suit, while to the other was affixed two plinths of solid rubber—evidently the halves of a split rubber heel. Here was the explanation of the cloven footprint we had seen impressed upon the earth by Bostwick's house.

Still grasped within the thing's right hand there lay the handle of the oddest-looking hammer I had ever seen—heavy

as a blacksmith's sledge, but fashioned like an anvil, one end a sharp and pointed cone, the other flat, but fitted with a sort of die shaped like the hoof of a gigantic goat. "That's it!" I murmured, as if I would convince myself. "That's what was used to stamp the Devil's mark upon the victims' faces. First smash the skull with the pointed end, and then reverse the weapon and stamp the victim with the Devil's brand!"

Again I bent to touch the ghastly head, and at my touch the mask rolled sidewise, then, shattered as it had been by de Grandin's bullet, split in two parts, laying bare the face beneath.

"De—de Grandin!" I croaked hoarsely, "it—it's——"

"Of course it is," he supplied as my lips refused to frame the name. "I have known for some time it was the reverend gentleman—who else could it have been?"

He turned his shoulder toward me and called across it: "Leave him as he lies, my friend; he will make interesting material for the coroner."

"But—but don't you even want to *look?*" I expostulated, horrified by his indifference.

"For why?" he answered. "I saw him when he tried to batter out my brains. That look was quite enough, my friend; let the others gaze on him and marvel; let us return to Monsieur Wilcox's house with these ones; there is something I would say to them anon."

8

DE GRANDIN called O'Toole and told him briefly what had happened, then having notified him where the body lay, hung up the telephone and turned a level stare upon young Wilcox and the girl.

"My friends," he told them sternly, "you are two fools—two mutton-headed, senseless fools. How dare you trifle with the love the good God gives you? Would you despise His priceless gift? *Ah bah,* I had thought better of you!"

"But, Doctor de Grandin," Janet Payne's reply was like a wail, "I can't do otherwise; I'm vowed and dedicated to a life of penance and renunciation. He made me take an oath, and——"

"A-ah?" the Frenchman's voice cut through her explanation. "He made you, *hein?* Very good; tell us of it, if you will be so kind."

"I was a little girl when he first took me," she answered, her voice growing calmer as she spoke. "My parents and I were traveling in Ecuador when we came down with fever. We were miles from any city and medical help could not be had. Mr. Folloilott came along while we were lying at the point of death in a native's hut, and nursed us tenderly. He risked his death from fever every moment he was with us, but showed no sign of fear. Mother died the day he came, and Father realized he had not long to live; so when the kind clergyman offered to take me as his ward, he gladly consented and signed a document Mr. Folloilott prepared. Then he died.

"It was a long, long time before I was strong enough to travel, but finally my strength came back, and we got through to the coast. Mr. Folloilott had the paper Father signed validated at the consul's office, then brought me back to this country. I never knew if I had any relatives or not. I know my guardian never looked for them.

"For a long time, till I was nearly twelve years old, he never let me leave the house alone. I never had a playmate, and Mr. Folloilott acted as my tutor. I spoke French and Spanish fluently and could read the hardest Greek and Latin

texts at sight before I was eleven, and had gone through calculus when I was twelve. The Book of Common Prayer and the Hymnal were my text-books, and I could repeat every hymn from *New Every Morning Is the Love* to *There is a Blessed Home Beyond this Land of Wo* by heart."

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed de Grandin pityingly.

"When I had reached thirteen he sent me to a sisters' school," the girl continued. "I boarded there and didn't leave during vacation; so I was much more advanced than any of the other pupils, and when I was fifteen they sent me home—back to Mr. Folloilott, I mean.

"Of course, coming back to the lonely rectory with no company but my guardian was hard after school, and I was homesick for the convent. He noticed it, and one day asked me if I shouldn't like to go back to Carlinville to stay. I told him that I would, and——"

She paused a moment and a thoughtful pucker gathered between her brows, as though an idea had struck her for the first time. "Why"—she exclaimed—"why, it was no better than a trick, and——"

"*Eh bien,* we do digress, *Mademoiselle,*" the Frenchman interrupted with a smile. "The evidence first, if you please, the verdict afterward. You told the reverend gentleman you should like to return to the good sisters, and——"

"And then he took me to the church," she answered, "and led me to the chancel, where he made me stop and turn my stockings down so that I knelt on my bare knees, while he held a Bible out to me, and made me put my hands on it and swear that I would dedicate myself to holy poverty, chastity and obedience, and as soon as I had reached eighteen, would go to Carlinville and enter as a postulant, progressing to the novitiate and finally making my profession as a nun.

"It was shortly after that Mr. Folloilott received the call to Norfolk Downs and I met George, and——" her voice trailed off, and once again sobs choked her words.

DE GRANDIN tweaked the ends of his mustache and smiled a trifle grimly. "I wish I had not shot him dead so quickly," he muttered to himself; then, to the girl:

"A promise such as that is no promise at all, *Mademoiselle.* As you yourself have said, it was a trick, and a most despicable one, at that. Now listen to *my* testimony, *Mademoiselle:*

"When Monsieur Wilcox called me to this place to look into these so strange murders, I was most greatly puzzled. The evidence of Chief O'Toole all pointed to some superphysical agency at work, and as I'd had much practise as a phantom-fighter, it was for me to say what tactics I should use, for what may rout a ghostly enemy is often useless when opposed to human foes, while what will kill a human being dead is useless as a pointed finger when directed at a spirit. You apprehend? Very good.

"So when I learned that *Monsieur* your guardian with the funny name I can not say had laid the onus of these killings on a piece of broken sculpture, I was most greatly interested. Stranger things had happened in the past; things quite as strange will doubtless happen in the future. The theory that the Devil was unloosed seemed tenable but for one little single thing: Every one this Devil killed was some one of an evil life. 'This is the very devil of a Devil, Jules de Grandin,' I tell me. 'Most times the Evil One attacks the good; this time the Evil One has singled out the evil for attack. It

does not hang together; it has the smell of fish upon it. *Oui-da,* but of course.'

"Accordingly, I made the careful study of your guardian. He is a very pious man; that much one sees while both his eyes are closed. *Ha,* but piety and goodness are not of necessity the same. By no means. Gille de Retz, the greatest monster ever clothed in flesh, he was a *pious* man, but far from being good. Cotton Mather, who hanged poor, inoffensive women on the gallows tree, he was a pious man; so was Torquemada, who fouled the pure air of heaven with the burnings of the luckless Jews in Spain. They all were pious—too pious to be truly good, *parbleu!*

"The evening when I met your guardian at dinner, I studied him some more. I hear Monsieur Wilcox tell the young rabbi that the debt upon his temple is extended. How does *Monsieur* your guardian take that statement? It makes him ill, by blue! Furthermore, he has upon his face the look of one who finds too late that he had made a great and terrible mistake. The loan would have been called had not the money-lender died. Now, for the first time, the clergyman finds the hated Jews have profited by the Shylock's death—and he looks as if he were about to die! 'Jules de Grandin, this are strange,' I tell me. 'You must keep the eye on this one, Jules de Grandin.' And, 'Jules de Grandin, I shall do so,' I reply to me.

"Meanwhile, he has been at great pains to tell us all once more that these killings are the work of righteous Heaven. Is it more superstition—or something else—which makes him tell me this? One wonders.

"When he had gone I learn that he has been a hunter and a mountain-climber, that he has shot a condor down in flight. '*Ah-ha,*' I say to me, 'what does this mean, if anything?'

"The police chief has shown to me a feather clipped by his bullet from the dreadful being which commits these murders. I have looked at it and recognized it. Although it has been metallized by a process of electro-plating, I have recognized it instantly. It is the feather of a condor. *U'm-m.* Once more one wonders, *Mademoiselle.*

"And while we sit and talk before the fire, there come the tidings of another killing. Monsieur Bostwick has been slain.

"We go at once and find him in his chair, dead like a mutton, and very peaceful in his pose; yet all his goods and chattels have been smashed to bits. The blow which killed him had done so instantly, and there is blood to mark the spot where he fell—yet he sits in his chair. I look around and come to a conclusion. The smashing of the furniture is but a piece of window-dressing to cover up the manner of the killing.

"But who can enter in a house where all the windows, save a single one upon the second floor, are latched, strike down a man, then vanish in thin air? I ask to know. Moreover, what was it that was seen to look into a window ten feet from the ground? I can not answer, but the next day I find that which helps me toward conclusions.

"There is blood upon the ground by Monsieur Bostwick's house; a little, tiny drop, it is, but I take it that it fell from off the murderer's weapon. There are also footprints—most extraordinary footprints—in the soft earth by the house. 'The murderer have stood here,' I inform me.

" 'Quite so,' I agree with me, 'but where was he before he stood there?'

"So up upon the roof I go, and there I find a strand of horsehair. I think: *Monsieur* your guardian is a skilled mountain-climber; he had been to South America. In that land the *vaqueros,* or herdsmen, use lariats of plaited horsehair in their work; they find them lighter and stronger than hemp. That I remember. I remember something else: A skilled mountaineer might have lassoed the chimney of that house, have drawn himself up to the roof, then lowered himself to the open window of the second-story room. He might have struck down Monsieur Bostwick from the window, then smashed the furniture to make it seem a struggle had been had. That done, he might have closed the window after him, lowered himself to the ground by his lariat, and made off while no one was the wiser. To disengage the lasso from the chimney would have been an easy task, I know, for I have seen it done when jutting rocks, instead of chimneys, held the mountain-climbers' ropes.

"As he slid down his rope he looked into the window of the hall, and when his evil mask was seen, they said it was the Devil. Yes, it were entirely possible.

"Now, while I stood upon the roof seeking that little strand of horsehair upon which hung my theory, who passed but your good guardian? He sees me there, and realizes I am hot upon the explanation of the crime. Anon he comes to Monsieur Wilcox's house—perhaps to talk with me and find out what I know—and I exert myself to be most disagreeable. I wish to sting him into overt action.

"*Parbleu,* I have not long to wait! This very night he comes into my room and would have served me as he did the others, but I am not beneath his hammer when it falls, and good Friend Trowbridge knocks the wind from him with a carafe.

"And then, too late, I learn that you and Monsieur Georges have the assignation. All well I know how that one will attack you if he finds you. To such an one the greatest insult is the thwarting of his will. And so I rush to warn you. The rest you know."

"The man was mad!" I exclaimed.

"Of course," replied the Frenchman. "He was fanatically ascetic, and you cannot make the long nose at Dame Nature with impunity, my friend. As your Monsieur John Hay has said:

> . . . he who Nature scorns and mocks
> By Nature is mocked and scorned.

"He brought his madness on himself, and——"

"But that sulfurous, blinding fire we saw—O'Toole saw it, too. What was that?"

"Have you never attended a banquet, my friend?" he asked with a grin.

"A banquet—whatever are you talking about?"

"About a banquet, *parbleu*—and about the photographs they take of such festivities. Do you not recall the magnesium flares the photographers set off to take their indoor pictures?"

"You—you mean it was only flashlight powder?" I stammered.

"Only that, my friend; nothing more fantastic, I assure you. Blazing in the dark, it blinded those who saw it; they smelled the acrid, pungent smoke, and imagination did the rest. *Voila;* we have the 'fires of hell' of which the good O'Toole did tell us."

Young Wilcox turned to Janet. "You see, dear," he urged, "that promise was extracted from you by a trick. It can't be binding, and I love you so much——"

De Grandin interrupted. "There is another vow that you must take, my child," he told the girl solemnly.

"A—a vow?" she faltered. "Why, I thought—I was beginning to think——"

"Then think of this: Can you repeat: 'I Janet, take thee, George, to my wedded husband——?"

A blush suffused her face, but: "I'll take that vow, if George still wants me," she replied.

"Wants you? *Par la barbe d'un cochon vert,* of a surety he wants you!" the Frenchman almost shouted. "And me, *pardieu,* I greatly want a drink of brandy!"

The Haunted Room

By CRISTEL HASTINGS

What is it that goes creeping through this room,
  Trailing its dusty garments as it crawls?
Why does the air seem like an icy breath
  That penetrates the dim and empty halls ?

They say that Death came once into this room—
  That old four-poster in the corner there—
They whisper, too, of shrieks that pierce the night,
  Of banging doors, and blue light everywhere.

A rose that hung outside the shuttered pane
  Withered and died one night when shrill winds moaned—
The queer blue light hovered a while, and then
  The very timbers of the old house groaned.

Weeds now run riot in the somber path
  Like snares for careless feet that wander through,
But no one comes, for no one ventures near —
  Always there is the dim light, pale and blue.

The low winds moan even on summer nights—
  There is a sighing sound in every room.
The mice have full possession of the halls
  And hold their ghostly dance in shadowed gloom.

They say each night when sane folk's clocks strike twelve
  The blue light glows a while through shuttered panes,
And then it is the *Thing* comes crawling back
  And tries to rid the floor of crimson stains.

The Phantom Hand

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

An astounding novel of Black Magic, eery murders, and weird occult happenings

The Story Thus Far

HURRYING home to Lorna West, to whom he is engaged, Don Wentworth has the night vision of her father being executed by hanging, and awakes to find himself choking and gasping in his stateroom. Lorna had summoned Don a year before, when he was in China, begging him to come to her at once, but he was captured by brigands, and held in bondage. In the morning Don reads a radio message to the effect that Senator Lemuel West has paid the last penalty of the law.

At San Francisco he learns that West was convicted on circumstantial evidence of the murder of Police Captain Morse, who had the goods on him and his associates. He hurries to Cannonville, where West had lived, and meets one Sudh Hafiz, a Persian in charge of a Babist temple.

Hafiz takes Don out to the house of Godfrey Moore, a millionaire, in a lonely part of the country, warning him that Moore practises the Black Art. Moore is taking care of Lorna, who has become mentally deranged. Don can see that she hardly knows him.

Moore shows his new television set to Hafiz, Don, and his bootlegger, Moroni, who had been mixed up in Senator West's affairs. Don, horrified, sees, in place of the stage of the grand opera, which the others see, the scene of West's hanging in the penitentiary yard. Suddenly the phantom West grows to life size and leaves the screen. Moroni cries out. When the lights are turned on, he is found dead, with finger-marks about his throat. The story continues:

"YOU saw the same picture that I did?" demanded Don of the Persian, as the car purred back along the lonely road across the swamp.

"I saw the same, and so did Moore, but not Moroni, for he was marked for death from the beginning. And his death was Godfrey Moore's challenge to us."

"You mean to say that Moroni was actually strangled by the phantom?" asked Don incredulously.

"Do not forget that you yourself had a narrow escape on board the *President Harrison,*" replied the other. "Yes, I mean to say that Godfrey Moore finds himself hard-pressed, and probably blackmailed by his confederates, who joined with him in sending poor West to his death. Remember, it was at Moore's own house that West was drugged, and from that house he was carried back to his own apartment, where the evidence had already been prepared that was to send him to the gallows."

"Who killed Captain Morse?"

"I believe the murderer has already paid the penalty," replied Sudh Hafiz.

"You mean it was Moroni?"

"In all probability. Well, what is the situation now? The gang believe that they have Moore at their mercy. He has determined to kill them—that is to say, Gus Walstein, the Democratic boss of

This story began in WEIRD TALES for July

"Suddenly he seemed to grow aware of the mocking, leering shadow that stood behind him."

Cannonville, and Abner Wells, the silk-stocking district's candidate for mayor last fall. Moroni is already gone."

"But—but how—assuming what you suggest is correct, how could a phantom kill Moroni?" asked Don. "And why should West, who was sent to his death by Godfrey Moore, as you claim, oblige him by killing off all the participants in the conspiracy?"

"I shall answer your last question first," replied the Persian, giving the wheel a twist as the car wabbled dangerously near the sucking mud beside the causeway. "I likened West to a bull in a china shop, and that is a good simile. He passed out of this life—I know it, for I was with him toward the last—burning with hatred toward the men who had railroaded him. A simple soul, not bad, but primitive, and with all primitive man's loves and hatreds.

"Now he finds himself in a place of darkness. He does not know just what has happened to him. But he sees a light, and struggles toward it. This light is his daughter, Lorna, who draws him by her love for him. He manages, in the clumsy way of the newly dead, to take possession of her——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Don.

"You saw the transformation of her face? Well, my friend, that very hatred that he feels toward all his former associates enables him to materialize a phantom that strangles Moroni."

"And why not Moore?"

"Moore knows how to protect himself. West is striking out blindly. Our task is to bring West to an understanding of his situation, to bid him direct his powers intelligently; in short, to make an ally of him."

Don fell silent, while the car, leaving the swamp, began to take the road back through the pine forests.

"Why didn't Moore attempt some trickery against us?" asked Don suddenly.

"Moore is not omnipotent. He had achieved his purpose—which, I may say, I should have prevented had I foreseen his object. He scored a decided victory over me in that. And he knows how to bide his time."

"I wish I'd insisted on taking Lorna with me," Don blurted out.

"It could not have been done. But she will never come to any harm at Moore's hands."

"Why not?"

"Some day I'll tell you," answered Sudh Hafiz.

The car ran on. Don was revolving it all over in his mind. Of course Hafiz was cracked. And yet, Don had seen too much that night to be any longer an uncompromising materialist. Trickery the whole thing might have been, must have been, and yet——

Suppose Moroni had died of a sudden heart attack, how could Moore have projected the phantom from the radio? And how could materialism explain the vision he had seen on board the ship, repeated in every detail in that room? He was aroused by Sudh Hafiz's voice. The Persian spoke hesitantly, almost timidly.

"When I told you I believed that Moroni was the murderer of Captain Morse, I was not entirely frank with you, Wentworth," he said. "As a matter of fact, it was Moroni who prepared the stage effects in West's apartment, the circumstantial evidence that condemned him. It was not his hand that struck the blow."

"Whose, then?" asked Don.

"It was Lemuel West's," answered Hafiz.

"What? You mean that Senator West actually was the murderer?"

"Not consciously. Not willingly. West was on intimate terms with Moore. In a moment of confidence—and even a man like Moore has his weaknesses—he had aroused West's interest in the Black Art. One of the tests of a Master, the first test that is required, is the ability to separate the astral double from the physical body. West had permitted Moore to hypnotize him and to withdraw his astral. Little by little Moore gained sufficient control over West to be able to dispatch his double on errands, to force it to obey his will unquestioningly. It is my belief that on the night of the tragedy, while West was in a drugged sleep at Moore's house, Moore sent his astral to murder Captain Morse."

"With a gavel?" asked Don incredulously.

"Have you ever sat at an amateur séance and seen a table smashed to pieces by the psychic powers about you?"

"I've heard of such things, but——"

"The astral counterpart possesses strength such as no human being is capable of. West's double smashed Morse's skull to pieces. The gavel was part of the evidence manufactured by Moroni."

Again Don fell into silence, but now he was conscious of a definite resentment against the Persian, as we feel resentment against those who endeavor to shake us out of our preconceived ideas. He said not another word until the car drew up outside Sudh Hafiz's house.

"You'll be my guest tonight?"

"No, I'm much obliged," answered Don, "but I think I'll go to a hotel. I want to mull over all this business."

"As you please, Westworth. Of course there may be an inquest, but I don't think so, and you're not likely to be called upon. It looks like a simple case of death from

heart disease. May I ask what you are planning to do?"

"I think Walstein and Abner Wells should be warned somehow," said Don.

"It wouldn't do the slightest good. You would simply get yourself in trouble. Remember, this town is sewed up tight politically, and Godfrey Moore runs it. Come and see me before you do anything."

He spoke in Persian to the lad who had appeared, and the lad ran back into the house and returned with Don's suitcase.

"I beg of you to do nothing until we have had the opportunity of a further chat," continued Sudh Hafiz. "As for a hotel, there's a good one, the Parmelee, just around the corner on the right. May I drive you there?"

"No, thanks, I'll walk," Don answered. "I need a breath of air."

"I think," said Sudh Hafiz deliberately, "that you may receive an important 'phone call in the morning. If you require a car, please call on my services. No taxi driver would take you out to Moore's place for any amount of money."

DON slept not at all that night, but then he had no desire to sleep. The events that had happened since his arrival at Cannonville, hitherto an unassimilated mass, gradually began to assume coherence in his mind during the long night watch. And the result was a decided hardening against Sudh Hafiz.

But that the Persian had been the means of bringing him to Lorna, Don would have felt an even deeper resentment against him. He was, in fact, at the parting of the ways. Either he had to swallow everything that Sudh Hafiz had told him, or else he must reject the supernatural element *in toto*. And, like most men in his position, he chose the latter course.

He succeeded in convincing himself, before morning, that the picture he had seen on the radio was the result of an overwrought brain, that the year of brooding over Lorna, and the shock of reading of her father's execution, must have produced visual hallucinations.

But he was sane enough now, he told himself, as he looked from the window of his bedroom at the street, with its bright lights, and the winking electric signs in the amusement district a few blocks away.

Sane enough to make his plans. These centered, for the present, exclusively about Lorna. To hunt down the men who had sent Lemuel West to his death, and clear her name—that was secondary, but first he resolved to get Lorna out of an environment which, he was convinced, was retarding her recovery. He did not altogether trust Godfrey Moore, and he did not believe that Lorna was getting the right sort of treatment in his home.

He determined to go out again in the morning and see Lorna, and ask her to become his wife. She had promised to marry him as soon as he returned from China. Even if she was mentally ill, who had a stronger right than he to undertake the task of caring for her?

With which resolution, Don lit a pipe and waited for the coming of dawn.

It came at last, and Don had a good hot bath, shaved, and dressed. He was feeling pretty fit, in spite of the night's experiences. He was about to go down to breakfast when his telephone rang.

"This is Godfrey Moore," came the voice. "How are you after last night's distressing experience, Wentworth?"

"I'm feeling about as well as could be expected," answered Don.

"That's good. Well, I'm phoning you about Lorna. I'm sorry to say she's had rather a bad relapse. In fact, I had my physician out here soon after you left, and he thinks she should be removed to

some institution where she can have complete rest."

"When do you propose to move her?" queried Don.

"I've already engaged a room for her at the State Institution for the Insane," came Moore's voice in bland tones.

Don was horrified. "A public institution?" he demanded.

"Yes, and an excellent one. I am one of the governing body."

"I'd like to see her—and you—first."

"By all means, my dear fellow. Come out as soon as you like; in fact, the sooner the better. I've already arranged for a nurse to come out here and take her away on the afternoon train."

All Don's resentment against Sudh Hafiz had disappeared with this conversation. His fears for Lorna rose paramount. He snatched a mouthful of breakfast and hurried round to the Persian's house, where he found Sudh Hafiz smoking a cigarette over the morning paper. Something in the man's manner indicated to Don that he had been awaiting him.

Don recounted the telephone conversation. "I can't understand it," he said. "Apparently he proposes to wash his hands of her, since he's sending her to a public institution. Of course I won't tolerate it. I've got a few thousand put by, and I'm going right out to ask her to marry me. Do you think I'll have any trouble with Moore?"

"I should say not the slightest," answered Sudh Hafiz. "In fact, I think he was just baiting a hook to get you to do exactly that."

"You mean you think he wants me to marry her?" asked Don.

"I think he wants to get her—and you—out of his immediate course. Godfrey Moore is playing a shrewd game, and like all the best strategists, he doesn't believe in taking on too many adversaries at once."

"I'm going right out there. I remembered your kind offer of a car. By the way, you seemed to anticipate my receiving an important telephone call."

"Yes," smiled the Persian in his enigmatic way. Don knew it was useless to question him.

"I may as well admit to you that last night I——" he began.

"My dear sir, it is unnecessary to tell me that! You Westerners have not the Oriental faculty of keeping the face from expressing the thoughts. And you still believe that I am—may I say unhinged?"

"Frankly, I don't know what I believe," answered Don. "All I want is to get Lorna out of Godfrey Moore's clutches."

"And I don't anticipate the slightest difficulty, as I was saying," answered Hafiz. "I can start with you right away."

Three minutes later the two were again on the road running out toward the house. About half-way, however, a strange vehicle appeared among the trees, coming in their direction. It turned out to be a motor-hearse. Sudh Hafiz slowed down and signalled the driver to stop.

"You've got Mr. Moroni's body inside?" he asked.

"Yep, got a call a coupla hours ago. The coroner was there and said there didn't need to be no inquest since it was a case of heart disease. But say, I wouldn't trust myself in that there ha'nted house at night for all the money in the world. I seen a feller killed by ha'nts once before, and he looked jest like Moroni—fleck of foam on his lips and all the horrors of hell in his eyes. Yep, and, between you and me, heart disease don't leave finger-prints on the throat. But it ain't my business, and I

ain't interferin'. I'm jest tellin' you, Mr. Halffish, because my wife goes to your temple."

"I'd keep it strictly to yourself, if I were you," said Sudh Hafiz, and the driver nodded and started the hearse again.

DON had queer premonitions of disaster long before the house came into sight, so that it was almost a shock to him to see it standing just as it had been on the night before. Hafiz drew up at the door, and rang the bell. But the peal, which could be heard within the house, elicited no answer. He rang again with like result, and looked at Don as if in perplexity.

"We've got to get in," said Don, looking about him. He saw that one of the windows on the ground floor was not quite closed, and that a solid trunk of creeper ran upward past the sill. He set foot on it and quickly scrambled up, Sudh Hafiz following him.

It was only the work of a moment to push the window up and drop to the floor inside. The two found themselves in a pantry, with the kitchen leading off it. They hurried through and saw the series of drawing-rooms in front of them.

A faint groaning became audible. Don ran through the blue velvet portieres. On the floor of the room in which they had sat the evening before lay Godfrey Moore. He was tightly trussed and gagged, but his eyes were open, and from the violent attempts to free himself that he was making, it did not seem that his injuries were very serious ones.

Don pulled out a pocket-knife and slashed the gag over his mouth, and Godfrey Moore instantly became violently vocal.

"Where's Lorna?" cried Don.

"Gone!" spluttered Godfrey. "He took her with him, that poor insane girl. He must have been mad himself to dare attempt this outrage!"

"Who?"

"Who? Gus Walstein, the political boss of Cannonville, and one of Lemuel West's most intimate associates. I'll show him who's got more power here. I'll——"

"Where has he taken her? What does he mean to do with her?" cried Don, while Sudh Hafiz took the pocket-knife from his hand and began cutting at the table-cover which, ripped into strips, had been used to truss up Moore very efficiently. "Tell me what happened, quick!"

"Gus Walstein came here about an hour ago. He'd heard of Moroni's sudden death last night, and he believed Moroni had been carrying certain papers that would implicate Walstein in the murder of Captain Morse, and that I'd got hold of them. He knows I've been at work ever since the trial trying to bring Gus Walstein to justice. I know his was the guiding hand behind that murder," continued Moore, his old glibness of speech rapidly returning to him.

"He came here just after the coroner and the hearse-driver had left. Must have been waiting for them to go. He threatened me with death unless I gave up those papers. I told him I'd taken no papers from Moroni, and that I wouldn't give them up if I had. Then he struck me over the head with some blunt instrument, and half stunned me."

Don glanced at Godfrey Moore's head, but saw no signs of any contusions; still that proved nothing.

"Tell me about Lorna," he said, trying to keep his voice steady.

"She came into the room half-dazed. I was barely conscious, and Walstein was going through my pockets. He seemed desperate, and when he saw her, I think

he got some sort of idea that she knew where the papers were, or else he may have thought he was holding her as a hostage, or to prevent her giving evidence that he had attacked me. He may have thought I was dead, and, anyway, he was not in the frame of mind to reason.

"He took her away with him, and she made no resistance. Poor girl, she's been little more than an automaton since that unfortunate affair last night."

"Where's his place, his home, his hangout?" shouted Don.

"You won't find him in any of those places. But I can guess where he's gone. Mike Moroni had a place at the head of the creek, an old trapper's cabin in the marshes that he rebuilt and used in his rum-running operations. I think he's gone there to ransack it."

"I know it," said Sudh Hafiz.

"But it's no use following him there. Walstein's desperate. More than likely he's brought some of his gang with him. They'll shoot without hesitation."

By this time Sudh Hafiz had got Godfrey Moore free of his bonds. The millionaire got up stiffly, rubbing his head. "I'll 'phone the police," he said, "and have the place surrounded. They'll be out here in a couple of hours at most——"

"I think not," answered Don decisively. "I'm going to get Lorna, and every minute is important."

"If you could save her, poor girl! The nurse will be out here for her this afternoon. It will be a terrible weight off my mind if I can turn her over to her unharmed."

"Lorna is not going to be turned over to any nurse, or sent to any institution," said Don, speaking as calmly as he could. "We've been engaged nearly two years, and she promised to marry me as soon as I returned from China. If I am fortunate enough to get her out of Gus Walstein's clutches, I'm going to take her straight into Cannonville and marry her."

Godfrey Moore's eyes lit up. "You mean that, Wentworth?" he cried eagerly.

"You don't intend to offer any objection?"

"Not the least in the world. It will be the only possible solution of the problem about her, for I have felt my own responsibilities very keenly. I congratulate you on your fine sense of honor, Wentworth."

"I love her," answered Don simply, but thawing under Moore's praise, despite his suspicions of the man, which had been growing steadily.

"But let me 'phone the police anyway," persisted the millionaire. "You are running up against a desperate gang —two gangs, Walstein's and Moroni's. No? But are you armed? I have a revolver in my desk which Walstein overlooked."

He crossed the room and, pressing a secret spring somewhere in the large mahogany desk, opened a drawer and took out a handy-looking forty-five revolver, which he placed in Don's hands.

"It's loaded in every chamber," he said. "I wish you better luck than I had with Walstein. I shall await the first news from you with the greatest anxiety."

"It is only about four miles from here," said Sudh Hafiz, as they got into the car. "But this road ends a mile farther on, and we shall probably have to walk. There is only a trail along the shore. Don't be alarmed for her, Wentworth. Of course you see now that the whole business was a fake?"

"I got the idea that Moore tied himself up, or had some one tie him up deliberately," answered Don. "But I don't yet see——"

"More than that. Moore sent Lorna West with Walstein, and she accompanied him because, as Moore said, she was in a condition of automatism. Walstein was the dupe. Moore sent her under some pretext that would be very acceptable to Walstein, who appreciates the company of a pretty woman. But he won't dare harm her. Just keep cool, and we'll save her. I think I know which way Moore's mind is working. Only keep cool, Wentworth—remember last night and keep cool, whatever happens."

"But what was Moore's purpose?"

"Walstein," replied the Persian, "is the second of the trio whom Moore has marked for death, and only a miracle can save him now. Certainly I could not if I would, for the forces that Godfrey Moore has set in motion can not be stayed."

There was an intense solemnity in the Persian's manner of speaking that almost convinced Don in spite of himself.

"You mean that Lorna is taking Walstein to his death?" he asked.

"Yes, but not consciously. She is a mere agent of the Evil Powers."

"Once I get her in my hands, I'll never let her go again," said Don. "All this is enigmatic to me. How many men do you suppose we shall meet at Moroni's place?"

"It makes no difference; you shall get Lorna West back unharmed if you will be guided by me," answered Sudh Hafiz.

Don sat beside him in silence. It was impossible to believe in Sudh Hafiz's prophecies, and yet they had an uncanny knack of being fulfilled. He took refuge from his doubts in thoughts of Lorna. To save her, make her his wife, restore her reason—that was all that mattered immediately, and the rest could wait.

"Will you tell me why you think Moore told us where Walstein was to be found, and why he gave me this gun?" he asked suddenly.

Sudh Hafiz shrugged his shoulders. "He knows you are to be his most powerful enemy," he answered. "Therefore, to send you against Walstein, and to send you armed, is a mere matter of policy. If either of you kills the other, he is that much better off. There is nothing deep or esoteric in that."

The end of the concrete road came suddenly into view. Beyond it was a mere track, winding along the shore, an impassable muddy trail, so far as the car was concerned. There was a circle of concrete for turning on, and Sudh Hafiz rounded it and parked the machine facing in the direction of Cannonville.

"We're in for a brisk walk—and a brisk shower, I think," he said, glancing up at the sky.

THE mud was ankle-deep. After they had proceeded a hundred yards or so Don stopped suddenly. "Walstein never brought Lorna this way this morning," he said. "There are no footprints in front of us. Besides, where did he leave his car?"

"We passed his car returning to Cannonville just after leaving," answered the Persian. "It was empty, save for the driver. Evidently he sent it back. Therefore he must have gone to Moroni's place in Godfrey Moore's gasoline launch, which, as a matter of fact, I did not see in its usual place on the sea-front," he concluded, smiling. "Forgive me, Wentworth, but I saw no reason to trouble you with all these details. We'll find them at Moroni's place. I hope they're there by now, for the girl's sake, for this looks more like a storm than a shower," he added.

As he spoke, the whips of the rain began to lash them. An immense dark thun-

dercloud rolled muttering overhead. The stinging rain became almost a cloudburst, and it grew steadily in violence. In a few moments Don and Hafiz were soaked to the skin.

The wind roared from the sea, driving it in great breakers upon the flats, and sending showers of drenching spray across the road, which here ran close to the water's edge. The two men shivered as they trudged through the muddy swamp. It was almost as dark as midnight.

"I hope they've not been caught out at sea in this storm," said Don.

"The sea hasn't had time to grow rough yet," answered Sudh Hafiz. "And there's the creek," he added, pointing to an inlet beyond a headland.

They ascended it steadily, the wind growing worse as they advanced. At the top they were hardly able to keep their feet, so violent was the gale. But the darkness was slowly dissipating, and, looking down, they could see the cabin at the head of the creek, which was filled with dark, churning, oily water, and the motor-launch drawn up beside it, as well as a larger vessel, evidently used by Moroni in his rum-running expeditions.

A trail led down from the headland toward the cabin; which was fringed at the rear with a repulsive-looking low scrub.

"I think we'd best keep under cover of that," said Don, pointing. "No need to advertise our approach, and it's getting light."

Sudh Hafiz agreed. They left the trail and made their way toward the cabin by a circuitous route among the great boulders that studded the sides of the headland. In a little while they had reached the scrub, and found a trail running through it in the direction of the cabin. The darkness had now become a sort of twilight; the violence of the storm had ceased, but the rain still fell in sheets.

A light was shining through the single window in the rear of the cabin, as if from a candle. There was a rear door, too, and silhouetted against the panes, the two could see the shadows of men—several men, who seemed to be gesticulating violently.

Creeping out of the scrub up to the rear door, Don and Sudh Hafiz stood, the former fingering the revolver that Godfrey Moore had given him. Through the ill-fitting door they could hear every word that was spoken within.

"You leave the girl alone," rumbled a man's bass voice. "Dummy? Yeah, and she ain't pretendin', neither. Godfrey said for to take her down into the basement and she'll maybe git a spark of reason there, seein' she follered Moroni there that night to try to git him to save her dad. That's what drove her bughouse. Godfrey says it's the only chance to git her to remember what she knows, to put her in the same place as where she got the shock."

"Shock? How come shock?" asked another voice with a sneer.

"Wasn't it a shock to the girl when she caught Moroni sortin' out his papers, and he refused to help save her dad's life? He'd have killed her then and there if Godfrey hadn't been trailin' him. That's what Godfrey told me anyways, but he's a slick liar. However, we're goin' to search this basement from end to end."

"And s'posin' we say you ain't?" asked a third voice. "Unless you come across with a coupla grand each."

The answer came in an inaudible snarl. Don knew that this speaker must be Walstein, and whatever he said, it seemed to beat down the other's opposition effectively, for the reply came in a grudging whisper of assent. There seemed to be

four men within the cabin, two of them apparently Walstein and one of his aides from town, while the two others were evidently part of Moroni's crew of rum-runners.

"Smart idea of Moroni's, diggin' this basement for his stock," came Walstein's voice. "Nobody'd guess there was a concrete foundation under this mud. Customs guys wouldn't find it in a score of years."

The candle flickered. Walstein's steps could be heard as he moved about inside the hut, and he was evidently carrying the candle, for it changed its position as he moved.

"See there, Benny," he said to his assistant. "Now who in hell would guess there was a flight of steps behind this plank? Moroni had a head on him. Pity he croaked last night."

"Croaked?" grinned the other. "You're woozy, Mr. Walstein. "Croaked? Yeah, but who croaked him? That Godfrey Moore is a damn sight too slick for my taste. Why didn't he come with us? You took his word for it that there wasn't no papers on Moroni. It's my belief he croaked him somehow, and he's gettin' away with the goods."

"Listen," growled Walstein, "Godfrey knows if anything happened to me I got evidence enough to put him where West went. Savvy? He wouldn't have sent me here on a fool's errand unless he was aimin' to croak me. And who's goin' to croak me here? Them two bums over there? Hey, you two, get down the stairs, and we'll follow you, and if you got any fancy stunts roamin' round in your heads, fergit them!"

The voices faded, as if the four were going down into the basement. When all was silent, Don put his hand on the door. But Sudh Hafiz stopped him.

"Take care," he whispered. "I do not like this. I can not rely on ambuscades, or my powers go. I do not know—it is all misty——"

Don, without answering him, opened the door quietly and stepped inside. It was all dark, and his first impression was that the upper floor of the cabin was empty.

Then a step sounded close beside him, and, as he whirled, a figure leaped at him out of the darkness. He felt the violent impact of some weapon upon his head. He tried to raise his revolver, but his hand was powerless, and he went plunging down into darkness.

How long Don was out he had no idea, but it could not have been very long. He came back to himself with a racking pain in his head, to find himself tied up with ropes, and seated in a corner of a cellar. Not far away was Sudh Hafiz, similarly tied. Four men were in the cellar, two of whom were searching among a heap of papers at the foot of an overturned desk, by the light of the candle. The two others were lounging sullenly near.

And then Don saw Lorna. She was seated in a chair, unbound, her eyes staring in front of her, as lifeless as if she had been a waxen figure.

"So you're snappin' out of it, huh?" asked one of the two loungers, speaking with an Italian accent, and coming up to Don.

It was easy to distinguish the two as the late Moroni's assistants, while Walstein was self-evident in the burly form in the flashy suit snarling over the papers. The man beside him was a flash city crook, evidently his aide. The farther end of the cellar was stocked with cases.

"Snappin' out, are they?" jeered Walstein, rising and coming toward Don. "I reckon I know you, Mister Wentworth.

Snoopin' on me, huh? Whadya expect to find? Who yuh workin' for—Godfrey Moore? Or mebbe you heard your broad had taken a fancy to me and come here with me, huh?"

He kicked Don savagely in the side with his heavy shoe, and shook his fist in Don's face.

"Listen, bo! You and the dago parson have got just about half an hour to live. I'm holdin' you till I've gone through Moroni's papers, in case I'm goin' to need you. But don't bank on that. Moroni's dead, and this place is goin' to be your tomb. And these two fellers are goin' to help croak you, so there won't be no one to give evidence. And that goes for you, too," he said, kicking Sudh Hafiz in the ribs.

"Don't be too sure, Mr. Walstein," answered the Persian in an even voice. "Sometimes the wisest of us are mistaken."

Walstein raised his foot again with an oath, looked into Sudh Hafiz's face, and set it down again. Cursing, he turned away.

"Let's get this business over, Benny," he said to his assistant. "Gimme a drink, some one!"

One of the two rum-runners ran to an open case and pulled out a bottle. He dexterously knocked off the glass rim at the top without uncorking it, and handed it to Walstein, who took a deep drink. Each of the others drank in turn, the last emptying the bottle and flinging it against the wall, breaking it in pieces. Walstein and Benny resumed their task, while the two others, lounging by the wall, began to chatter in Italian.

The little light of the candle barely illuminated the vault. Outside its periphery, all was shadow. Don, staring at Lorna, could hardly see her face. She seemed in a state of profound unconsciousness.

He was quietly working at the ropes that bound him. Tight as they were, he had managed to relax them sufficiently to get his fingers about what seemed to be the main knot. But he was still partly paralyzed by the blow upon the head that he had received, and was perforce compelled to desist until he could gather a little more of his strength.

He sat there, trying to pull himself together. But suddenly a gasp came from his lips. Something was happening to Lorna. Her face, her form, were growing misty.

A cry of exultation broke from Walstein's lips as, after looking through and tossing aside paper after paper, he held one close up to the candle-flame.

"Benny, I got something!" he shouted. "Here's Godfrey Moore's signature to that note to Abner Wells! That'll hold the feller for a time!"

He laid the paper aside with two or three others that he had selected, and fell to work with renewed haste. But Don's eyes were fixed on Lorna. A faint, lambent light was beginning to play about her features, a light that appeared to be invisible to the two Italians close beside her, for they were chattering to each other and glancing malevolently at Walstein and Benny, sorting the papers on the floor.

By that light Don could see, to his horror, a singular and fearful change proceeding. Lorna seemed to be awaking from her sleep or trance. But it was like the awaking of a dead person. It was like a corpse coming back to life.

Slowly her eyelids were unclosing. Slowly the vacant look of the features was vanishing. And slowly there came an ex-

pression on the face. And, as on the night before in Moore's drawing-room, a mask of hatred was spreading over the sweet countenance—a mask of such abominable hatred that Don shuddered at the sight of it. And again, as before, the features were slowly and in some inexplicable way taking on the lineaments of the face of Lemuel West, as Don remembered it!

It was the most terrific metamorphosis that Don had ever seen. It made him forget his bonds, his danger, and he could only crouch where he was and watch that awful change that was taking place in the woman he loved.

He believed now! He believed everything that Sudh Hafiz had told him. In that moment all his preconceptions, all his materialism broke down in the light of stunning reality.

That look on Lorna's face would have appalled the bravest man who ever lived. And yet none of the four seemed to see what was happening. They could not even see the steady bluish glow that threw the girl's face into clear relief.

Only the Persian, Sudh Hafiz, saw it, and he conveyed this knowledge by the faintest gesture as he half turned his face toward Don's for a moment.

But another change was taking place in Lorna, for her outlines were growing momentarily more hazy. A swirling mist seemed to be enveloping her. It was coiling up from her face, from her body, eddying and revolving in front of her and above her, illumined by that same lambent light. And still none of the four was aware of it. It was incredible, but it was true.

The mist was thickening, condensing. It was gradually assuming the shape of a huge egg, swaying and rotating in front of the girl. The egg bisected into two unequal parts. From the upper and lower part respectively there issued two projections that became ill-defined arms and legs.

The mist was assuming human form —it was becoming a man—the form of the dead man, Lemuel West!

Don bit his tongue to keep from crying out in his horror as the figure of West became momentarily more clearly defined. It faced Lorna. Not flesh, and yet not phantom, but more phantom than flesh. A tenuous outline, a stealthy shadow that was gradually assuming personality, awaking to life as Lorna once more relapsed into trance, drawing upon her vitality to give itself fictitious existence.

Lorna's face relaxed. It became placid, gentle. The look of hatred that she had worn was now transferring itself to the face of the phantom. There stood Lemuel West, the very incarnation of evil passions, his hands clenched, his head lolling crookedly upon his shoulder. On Lorna's face was now the waxen mask of sleep, or trance—or death. She had sunk back into her chair.

Now Don could see what looked like a thick band of radiant light connecting the bodies of father and daughter. The phantom bobbed and swayed, and with each movement the cord seemed to be elongated. It was beginning to thin at the middle. It waned to the thinness of a hair. It snapped, and the phantom floated free.

Lemuel West stood before his daughter. Don could see the glowing eyes of the phantom fixed on her pale face, and for just an instant the look of hatred seemed to change to one of pity or love. And in that moment the phantom's outlines seemed to shrink, and Lorna stirred and faintly smiled.

But the next moment Lemuel West

stood there again, the same look of hate upon his face, and Lorna had subsided into her death-like trance once more.

Lemuel West turned slowly in the direction of the two men who were sorting papers upon the floor. At that moment Gus Walstein raised his head, looked straight at the phantom—and saw nothing.

"Well, we're almost through. Hey, you two dagoes, bring some more drink!" he shouted drunkenly.

One of the two Italians began moving toward the broken case that contained the whisky-bottles. He took another bottle and brought it back to Walstein. And he walked straight through the phantom and never saw it!

GUS WALSTEIN raised the bottle to his lips, tilted back his head, and took a long drink. He handed it to Benny.

"Well, we ain't got all we want, but we got something," he shouted. "Le's go through this last pile, and then we'll fix them two butters-in here!"

He reeled, and again squatted down on the floor, sorting the last batch of Moroni's papers by the light of the candle.

It was burning low, and the long, red-tipped wick sent up a wavering flame and a stench of grease. It broke off, leaving only a tiny fragment in the tallow, to which the little flame clung, trying to re-establish itself. The cellar was almost dark.

Don saw the two Italians looking malevolently at Walstein and his companion. He saw the specter raise its hand and point toward them. One of the two men raised his head, and his hand dropped to his belt.

Walstein cursed at the darkness. Still neither he nor any of the others seemed aware of the shadow flitting to and fro between them, like a bobbin on a loom, as if weaving some fearful net that was to entrap them. Yet it had come into clearer relief against the darkness, as if it were darker than the darkness.

And now, straining his horrified eyes, Don watched Lemuel West gaining strength and power. At first he had crouched and swayed, like a man seeking to gain his foothold. Then a succession of tremors had run through the shadowy form, and all at once it had grown vigorous, vital, gorilla-like. And Lorna's body had become still more shrunken, until she looked like a child—like the waxen effigy of a child.

Lemuel West was advancing toward Walstein with clenched fists. Now he was standing immediately behind him, one arm upraised. Walstein looked up.

"Well, that finishes the pile, Benny," he said. "Br-r-r, it's cold here!"

The arm fell. Walstein yelped, staggered to his feet, and stood swaying and clutching at his heart.

"They got me, Benny!" he yelled. "Get them, the ———e!"

Quick as a flash the man Benny whirled, gun in hand. The roar of the discharge followed, and one of the two Italians screeched and stumbled forward, recovered himself, and whipped out a knife. He and his companion flung themselves upon Benny.

Walstein had got a gun from his pocket. He fired, but the bullet went wild, and the next moment the four were engaged in a desperate mêlée, while behind them stood the phantom, arm still upraised, a leer upon its shadowy face.

Yelling and cursing, the four struggled to and fro, a murder-knot that twined and unfastened, disclosing knives that flashed in the candle-light and guns that roared and sent up coils of acrid smoke.

Benny's gun spoke three times in quick succession, and one of the Italians dropped, half his face blown away. But the next instant his companion's knife flashed, and Benny dropped, a fearful, gaping wound in his chest.

Moaning like a wounded dog, he rolled over and over until he came to rest at Don's feet. He looked up at him, his features twisted in a spasm of fearful, baffling hate and fear, and died.

Walstein and the second Italian were locked in a death struggle, each trying to get a grip on the other's hand, and both bleeding from half a dozen wounds. Don saw Walstein wrench his hand free, place the revolver to the Italian's head, and pull the trigger. But the hammer fell on an empty cartridge, and the next moment the Italian's knife went home.

Shrieking like a fiend, Walstein poised his great bulk, seized the Italian in his arms, ignoring the flashing knife which struck home again and again, and, with the exercise of all his strength, he broke the man in two, raised him, and hurled the limp, quivering body against the wall. It fell thudding to the floor, neck and back broken.

Walstein stood rocking like a giant tree about to fall, the blood streaming down his body. And suddenly he seemed to grow aware of the mocking, leering shadow that stood behind him.

He turned. The dead man and the dying one glared into each other's eyes. A yell of horror broke from Walstein's lips.

"You?" he shrieked. "You—you—you?"

The phantom's lips parted, and it seemed to Don as if there passed from them some message that he could not hear. Walstein's eyes grew lurid with horror, then filmed, and with a crash the boss of Cannonville dropped dead among the three dead men.

All the while Don had been working intermittently at his bonds. Now he felt the knot begin to loosen in his fingers. And suddenly, inexplicably, he was free. He staggered to his feet. His head was reeling, and he could only faintly see the outlines of the phantom in the flickering candle-light.

But he saw it turn toward him with hate-distorted face, and raise its arm. Then of a sudden the arm dropped, and the next moment Lemuel West was no longer there, but the swirl of mist was again coiling about Lorna's body.

And Lorna seemed to be growing larger. She looked more life-like, too. Her features were no longer a waxen effigy, and she stirred and sighed.

DON staggered to the side of Sudh Hafiz. The Persian looked up at him impassively. Don tried to find the knot in the cord that bound him, but to his amazement saw that he was free.

Sudh Hafiz smiled and rose to his feet. He put out one hand and caught Don as he swayed.

"I would have saved them," he said, "but it would have meant to reverse the inexorable workings of divine retribution. You believe in me now, Wentworth? You'll work with me to save Lorna, and to stamp out this nest of deviltry?"

"I'll work with you to the end," Don answered. And he staggered toward Lorna and gathered her into his arms.

She was awake. She sat up in her chair. She looked at him, but there was no recognition in her eyes, which only stared blankly before her.

"Don't you know me, dear?" asked Don. "I've come to take you away."

She rose to her feet obediently, but no

word came from her lips. Suddenly an exclamation broke from Sudh Hafiz.

"Take care, Wentworth!" he cried. "Face them! Walk backward to the door! Don't let them get behind you, and they'll be powerless!"

Don swung about. By the faint light of the candle he could see four swirling shapes slowly materializing above the bodies of the four dead men.

Three of them seemed to hover uncertainly, as if unable to take form, but the fourth had already assumed Walstein's outlines, and was crouching with clenched fists, as if about to strike, while the lips were drawn back in a bestial snarl.

Suddenly the thing leaped, and Don felt as if he had been plunged into an icy bath. He struck at it, and his fist passed through the phantom.

He whirled as it tried to leap behind him. Somehow he knew that if it could strike from behind he would be dead in a moment. He saw Sudh Hafiz at his side. He lifted Lorna in his arms. Step by step they fought their way backward until they reached the cellar entrance. Backing to the stairs, the Persian shut the door upon the interior.

"Now make for the open, Wentworth," he shouted.

A few moments later Don set Lorna down outside the cabin and tried to pull himself together.

It must have been hardly later than noon, but the same strange, dim twilight hung over land and sea, and sulfurous, yellow clouds were heavy in the sky. Sudh Hafiz came up to Don.

"We're safe for the present," he said. "That was a shrewd stroke of Moore's, but it had small chance of success. Walstein's hate might have enabled him to strike home, had he had a little experience, but you can't expect a man to be able to kill within a few minutes after his death.

"I told you," he added, seeing Don didn't understand, "that Moore had trained West's double so that it was able to travel at will, to obey his commands, and even to kill Captain Morse with a blow? By the aid of the same infernal power he was able to control Walstein's phantom after his death, but Walstein had neither the strength nor the knowledge. We shall meet him again. A dead man is more potent for evil than a living one. Where are you thinking of taking Lorna?"

"Anywhere away from here," said Don.

"You'd better bring her to my house for the present. Don't be alarmed at her condition. Once we've destroyed that viper's nest, I think she'll be her old self again." He pointed to the boat. "We can pull round the shore to the car," he said, "and be in Cannonville in a couple of hours."

"Suppose Moore has taken our car?"

Sudh Hafiz smiled. "He doesn't work that way. He's thrown the dice, and won—and lost. Won, because he got rid of Walstein. Lost, because I have the papers Walstein had sorted out, and Moore, who was an interested spectator of the whole proceedings, knows that the issues are now fairly joined between us."

"Moore—saw?"

"Yes, that was not difficult in his Akashic Mirror, which shows past, present, and a short way into the future. Of which more later. Now, Wentworth, the first thing necessary is to get this girl to my house, and then we'll plan our course of action."

Using the dead Lemuel West as his tool, Godfrey Moore has now rid himself of two of his confederates in crime. Will the third, Abner Wells, share their fate? Can Sudh Hafiz succeed in winning Lemuel West to his side, so as to destroy Moore? Don't miss the next installment. Order your copy of WEIRD TALES from your dealer now.

No Eye-Witnesses

By HENRY S. WHITEHEAD

Everard Simon had a weird experience in Flatbush when his shoes were caked with blood and forest mold from the slaying of Jerry the Wolf

THERE were blood stains on Everard Simon's shoes. . . .

Simon's father had given up his country house in Rye when his wife died, and moved into an apartment in Flatbush among the rising apartment houses which were steadily replacing the original rural atmosphere of that residential section of swelling Brooklyn.

Blood stains—and forest mold—on his shoes!

The younger Simon—he was thirty-seven, his father getting on toward seventy—always spent his winters in the West Indies, returning in the spring, going back again in October. He was a popular writer of informative magazine articles. As soon as his various visits for week-ends and odd days were concluded, he would move his trunks into the Flatbush apartment and spend a week or two, sometimes longer, with his father. There was a room for him in the apartment, and this he would occupy until it was time for him to leave for his summer camp in the Adirondacks. Early in September he would repeat the process, always ending his autumn stay in the United States with his father until it was time to sail back to St. Thomas or Martinique or wherever he imagined he could write best for that particular winter.

There was only one drawback in this arrangement. This was the long ride in the subway necessitated by his dropping in to his New York club every day. The club was his real American headquarters. There he received his mail. There he usually lunched and often dined as well. It was at the club that he received his visitors and his telephone calls. The club was on Forty-Fourth Street, and to get there from the apartment he walked to the Church Avenue subway station, changed at De Kalb Avenue, and then took a Times Square express train over the Manhattan Bridge. The time consumed between the door of the apartment and the door of the club was exactly three-quarters of an hour, barring delays. For the older man the arrangement was ideal. He could be in his office, he boasted, in twenty minutes.

To avoid the annoyances of rush hours in the subway, Mr. Simon senior commonly left home quite early in the morning, about seven o'clock. He was a methodical person, always leaving before seven in the morning, and getting his breakfast in a downtown restaurant near the office. Everard Simon rarely left the apartment until after nine, thus avoiding the morning rush-hour at its other end. During the five or six weeks every year that they lived together the two men really saw little of each other, although strong bonds of understanding, affection, and respect bound them together. Sometimes the older man would awaken his son early in the morning for a brief conversation. Occasionally the two would have a meal together, evenings, or on Sundays; now and then an evening would be spent

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in each other's company. They had little to converse about. During the day they would sometimes call each other up and speak together briefly on the telephone from club to office or office to club. On the day when Everard Simon sailed south, his father and he always took a farewell luncheon together somewhere downtown. On the day of his return seven months later, his father always made it a point to meet him at the dock. These arrangements had prevailed for eleven years. He must get that blood wiped off. Blood! How——?

During that period, the neighborhood of the apartment had changed out of all recognition. Open lots, community tennis-courts, and many of the older one-family houses had disappeared, to be replaced by the ubiquitous apartment houses. In 1928 the neighborhood which had been almost rural when the older Simon had taken up his abode "twenty minutes from his Wall Street office" was solidly built up except for an occasional, and now incongruous, frame house standing lonely and dwarfed in its own grounds among the towering apartment houses, like a lost child in a preoccupied crowd of adults whose business caused them to look over the child's head.

One evening, not long before the end of his autumn sojourn in Flatbush, Everard Simon, having dined alone in his club, started for the Times Square subway station about a quarter before nine. Doubled together lengthwise, and pressing the pocket of his coat out of shape, was a magazine, out that day, which contained one of his articles. He stepped on board a waiting Sea Beach express train, in the rearmost car, sat down, and opened the magazine, looking down the table of contents to find his article. The train started after the ringing of the warning bell and the automatic closing of the side doors, while he was putting on his reading-spectacles. He began on the article.

He was dimly conscious of the slight bustle of incoming passengers at Broadway and Canal Street, and again when the train ran out on the Manhattan Bridge because of the change in the light, but his closing of the magazine with a page-corner turned down, and the replacing of the spectacles in his inside pocket when the train drew in to De Kalb Avenue, were almost entirely mechanical. He could make that change almost without thought. He had to cross the platform here at De Kalb Avenue, get into a Brighton Beach local train. The Brighton Beach expresses ran only in rush hours and he almost never travelled during those periods.

He got into his train, found a seat, and resumed his reading. He paid no attention to the stations—Atlantic and Seventh Avenues. The next stop after that, Prospect Park, would give him one of his mechanical signals, like coming out on the bridge. The train emerged from its tunnel at Prospect Park, only to re-enter it again at Parkside Avenue, the next following station. After that came Church Avenue, where he got out every evening.

As the train drew in to that station, he repeated the mechanics of turning down a page in the magazine, replacing his spectacles in their case, and putting the case in his inside pocket. His mind entirely on the article, he got up, left the train, walked back toward the Caton Avenue exit, started to mount the stairs.

A few moments later he was walking, his mind still entirely occupied with his article, in the long-familiar direction of his father's apartment.

The first matter which reminded him of his surroundings was the contrast in his breathing after the somewhat stuffy air of the subway train. Consciously he

drew in a deep breath of the fresh, sweet outdoor air. There was a spicy odor of wet leaves about it somehow. It seemed, as he noticed his environment with the edge of his mind, darker than usual. The crossing of Church and Caton Avenues was a brightly lighted corner. Possibly something was temporarily wrong with the lighting system. He looked up. Great trees nodded above his head. He could see the stars twinkling above their lofty tops. The sickle edge of a moon cut sharply against black branches moving gently in a fresh wind from the sea.

He walked on several steps before he paused, slackened his gait, then stopped dead, his mind responding in a note of quiet wonderment.

Great trees stood all about him. From some distance ahead a joyous song in a manly bass, slightly muffled by the wood of the thick trees, came to his ears. It was a song new to him. He found himself listening to it eagerly. The song was entirely strange to him, the words unfamiliar. He listened intently. The singer came nearer. He caught various words, English words. He distinguished "merry," and "heart," and "repine."

It seemed entirely natural to be here, and yet, as he glanced down at his brown clothes, his highly polished shoes, felt the magazine bulging his pocket, the edge of his mind caught a note of incongruity. He remembered with a smile that strange drawing of Aubrey Beardsley's, of a lady playing an upright cottage pianoforte in the midst of a field of daisies! He stood, he perceived, in a kind of rough path worn by long usage. The ground was damp underfoot. Already his polished shoes were soiled with mold.

The singer came nearer and nearer. Obviously, as the fresh voice indicated, it was a young man. Just as the voice presaged that before many seconds the singer must come out of the screening array of tree boles, Everard Simon was startled by a crashing, quite near by, at his right. The singer paused in the middle of a note, and for an instant there was a primeval silence undisturbed by the rustle of a single leaf.

Then a huge timber wolf burst through the underbrush to the right, paused, crouched, and sprang, in a direction diagonal to that in which Everard Simon was facing, toward the singer.

STARTLED into a frigid immobility, Simon stood as though petrified. He heard an exclamation, in the singer's voice, a quick "heh"; then the sound of a struggle. The great wolf, apparently, had failed to knock down his quarry. Then without warning, the two figures, man and wolf, came into plain sight; the singer, for so Simon thought of him, a tall, robust fellow, in fringed deerskin, slashing desperately with a hunting-knife, the beast crouching now, snapping with a tearing motion of a great punishing jaw. Short-breathed "heh's" came from the man, as he parried dexterously the lashing snaps of the wicked jaws.

The two, revolving about each other, came very close. Everard Simon watched the struggle, fascinated, motionless. Suddenly the animal shifted its tactics. It backed away stealthily, preparing for another spring. The young woodsman abruptly dropped his knife, reached for the great pistol which depended from his belt in a rough leather holster. There was a blinding flash, and the wolf slithered down, its legs giving under it. A great cloud of acrid smoke drifted about Everard Simon, cutting off his vision; choking smoke which made him cough.

But through it, he saw the look of horrified wonderment on the face of the young woodsman; saw the pistol drop on

the damp ground as the knife had dropped; followed with his eyes, through the dimming medium of the hanging smoke, the fascinated, round-eyed stare of the man who had fired the pistol.

There, a few feet away from him, he saw an eldritch change passing over the beast, shivering now in its death-struggle. He saw the hair of the great paws dissolve, the jaws shorten and shrink, the lithe body buckle and heave strangely. He closed his eyes, and when he opened them, he saw the figure in deerskins standing mutely over the body of a man, lying prone across tree-roots, a pool of blood spreading, spreading, from the concealed face, mingling with the damp earth under the tree-roots.

Then the strange spell of quiescence which had held him in its weird thrall was dissolved, and, moved by a nameless terror, he ran, wildly, straight down the narrow path between the trees. . . .

It seemed to him that he had been running only a short distance when something, the moon above the trees, perhaps, began to increase in size, to give a more brilliant light. He slackened his pace. The ground now felt firm underfoot, no longer damp, slippery. Other lights joined that of the moon. Things became brighter all about him, and as this brilliance increased, the great trees all about him turned dim and pale. The ground was now quite hard underfoot. He looked up. A brick wall faced him. It was pierced with windows. He looked down. He stood on pavement. Overhead a street-light swung lightly in the late September breeze. A faint smell of wet leaves was in the air, mingled now with the fresh wind from the sea. The magazine was clutched tightly in his left hand. He had, it appeared, drawn it from his pocket. He looked at it curiously, put it back into the pocket.

He stepped along over familiar pavement, past well-known façades. The entrance to his father's apartment loomed before him. Mechanically he thrust his left hand into his trousers pocket. He took out his key, opened the door, traversed the familiar hallway with its rugs and marble walls and bracket side-wall light-clusters. He mounted the stairs, one flight, turned the corner, reached the door of the apartment, let himself in with his key.

It was half-past nine and his father had already retired. They talked through the old man's bedroom door, monosyllabically. The conversation ended with the request from his father that he close the bedroom door. He did so, after wishing the old man good-night.

He sat down in an armchair in the living-room, passed a hand over his forehead, bemused. He sat for fifteen minutes. Then he reached into his pocket for a cigarette. They were all gone. Then he remembered that he had meant to buy a fresh supply on his way to the apartment. He had meant to get the cigarettes from the drug-store between the Church Avenue subway station and the apartment! He looked about the room for one. His father's supply, too, seemed depleted.

He rose, walked into the entry, put on his hat, stepped out again into the hallway, descended the one flight, went out into the street. He walked into an unwonted atmosphere of excitement. People were conversing as they passed, in excited tones; about the drug-store entrance a crowd was gathered. Slightly puzzled, he walked toward it, paused, blocked, on the outer edge.

"What's happened?" he inquired of a young man whom he found standing just beside him, a little to the fore.

"It's a shooting of some kind," the young man explained. "I only just got

here myself. The fellow that got bumped off is inside the drug-store,—what's left of him. Some gang-war stuff, I guess."

He walked away, skirting the rounded edge of the clustering crowd of curiosity-mongers, proceeded down the street, procured the cigarettes elsewhere. He passed the now enlarged crowd on the other side of the street on his way back, returned to the apartment, where he sat, smoking and thinking, until eleven, when he retired. Curious—a man shot; just at the time, or about the time, he had let that imagination of his get the better of him—those trees!

His father awakened him about five minutes before seven. The old man held a newspaper in his hand. He pointed to a scare-head on the front page.

"This must have happened about the time you came in," remarked Mr. Simon.

"Yes—the crowd was around the drug-store when I went out to get some cigarettes," replied Everard Simon, stretching and yawning.

When his father was gone and he had finished with his bath, he sat down, in a bathrobe, to glance over the newspaper account. A phrase arrested him:

". . . the body was identified as that of 'Jerry the Wolf,' a notorious gangster with a long prison record." Then, lower down, when he had resumed his reading:

". . . a large-caliber bullet which, entering the lower jaw, penetrated the base of the brain. . . . no eye-witnesses. . . ."

Everard Simon sat for a long time after he had finished the account, the newspaper on the floor by his chair. "No eye-witnesses!" He must, really, keep that imagination of his within bounds, within his control.

Slowly and reflectively, this good resolution uppermost, he went back to the bathroom and prepared for his morning shave.

Putting on his shoes, in his room, he observed something amiss. He picked up a shoe, examined it carefully. The soles of the shoes were caked with black mold, precisely like the mold from the woodpaths about his Adirondack camp. Little withered leaves and dried pine-needles clung to the mold. And on the side of the right shoe were brownish stains, exactly like freshly dried bloodstains. He shuddered as he carried the shoes into the bathroom, wiped them clean with a damp towel, then rinsed out the towel. He put them on, and shortly afterward, before he entered the subway to go over to the club for the day, he had them polished.

The bootblack spoke of the killing on that corner the night before. The bootblack noticed nothing amiss with the shoes, and when he had finished, there was no trace of any stains.

Simon did not change at De Kalb Avenue that morning. An idea had occurred to him between Church Avenue and De Kalb, and he stayed on the Brighton local, secured a seat after the emptying process which took place at De Kalb, and went on through the East River tunnel.

He sent in his name to Forrest, a college acquaintance, now in the district attorney's office, and Forrest received him after a brief delay.

"I wanted to ask a detail about this gangster who was killed in Flatbush last night," said Simon. "I suppose you have his record, haven't you?"

"Yes, we know pretty well all about him. What particular thing did you want to know?"

"About his name," replied Simon. "Why was he called 'Jerry the Wolf'—that is, why 'The Wolf' particularly?"

"That's a very queer thing, Simon. Such a name is not, really, uncommon. There was that fellow, Goddard, you remember. They called him 'The Wolf of Wall Street.' There was the fiction criminal known as 'The Lone Wolf.' There have been plenty of 'wolves' among criminal 'monikers.' But this fellow, Jerry Goraffsky, was a Hungarian, really. He was called 'The Wolf,' queerly enough, because there were those in his gang who believed he was one of those birds who could change himself into a wolf! It's a queer combination, isn't it?—for a New York gangster?"

"Yes," said Everard Simon, "it is, very queer, when you come to think of it. I'm much obliged to you for telling me. I was curious about it somehow."

"That isn't the only queer aspect of this case, however," resumed Forrest, a light frown suddenly showing on his keen face. "In fact that wolf-thing isn't a part of the case—doesn't concern us, of course, here in the district attorney's office. That's nothing but blah. Gangsters are as superstitious as sailors; more so, in fact!

"No. The real mystery in this affair is—the bullet, Simon. Want to see it?"

"Why—yes; of course—if you like, Forrest. What's wrong with the bullet?"

Forrest stepped out of the room, returned at once, laid a large, round ball on his desk. Both men bent over it curiously.

"Notice that diameter, Simon," said Forrest. "It's a hand-molded round ball—belongs in a collection of curios, not in any gangster's gat! Why, man, it's like the slugs they used to hunt the bison before the old Sharps rifle was invented. It's the kind of a ball Fenimore Cooper's people used—'Deerslayer!' It would take a young cannon to throw that thing. Smashed in the whole front of Jerry's ugly mug. The inside works of his head were spilled all over the sidewalk! It's what the newspapers always call a 'clue.' Who do you suppose resurrected the horse-pistol—or the ship's blunderbuss—to do that job on Jerry? Clever, in a way. Hooked it out of some dime museum, perhaps. There are still a few of those old 'pitches' still operating, you know, at the old stand—along East Fourteenth Street."

"A flintlock, single-shot horse-pistol, I'd imagine," said Everard Simon, laying the ounce lead ball back on the mahogany desk. He knew something of weapons, new and old. As a writer of informational articles that was part of his permanent equipment.

"Very likely," mused the assistant district attorney. "Glad you came in, old man."

And Everard Simon went on uptown to his club.

Old Clothes

By JOHN D. WHITING

The old inventor learns the truth about life from his marvelous radio receiver

THE great inventor sank upon his couch, tired and rather depressed. There, before him, was the last and greatest child of his brain, a radio receiver many times more sensitive than any other in the world. But, after all, what was the use? Was the struggle worth while? He was an old man, worn out and sick and nearing the end. And when he was gone, fools, he reflected, would misuse his invention, perhaps to get some ungodly jazz from the far ends of the earth.

How still was the night! Not a breath stirred in the maple trees outside his window. And over them twinkled the stars, countless incredible proofs of a universe unbounded; a universe cruel as death, infinite, heartless, inhuman. The old man bowed his white head to shut out the stars.

Suddenly something began to come in on his marvelous receiver. Strange, he had tuned the thing so as to bar any ordinary wave length. All he had wanted was silence and rest. But here it was, faint as a breath but clear enough in the silence, a message in Morse:

"Dear Girl:

"I hope this will reach you at Saturn. I tuned it for Saturn, knowing that you must be on your way there. I've had a most interesting trip—where do you suppose I've been? Why, you'd never guess: back to that quaint little spot we used to call 'the world.' It was too funny for words and, still, rather pathetic. My dear, I had forgotten how very primitive it was.

"The voyage down was really lovely, a calm brilliant night with the planets glowing like fire in a velvet black sky. As we approached it the dear old 'world,' lit by the full summer sun, was a dazzling mirror of light touched with all the tints of the spectrum on its curtain of clouds. You know, I think that curtain is thinner than it was when we left. As I got into the mists, the radiation of light burst suddenly into a vast dome of dazzling blue, and the black sky with its millions of stars was blotted from sight. You remember the same effect when we came in to Venus?

"I couldn't make out where I was at first, but there was a great stretch of land and I came down at once. Well, my dear, what do you think, it proved to be 'home,' that great field we used to call America —remember?—you called it 'the States'. I travelled all over the globe for twenty-four hours, refreshing my memory, Grace, on the old haunts that we knew. Do you remember dirty old London, and Paris, or Italy—my, it was lovely!—and the poor little Alps? It was all so natural, but so small and funny that I could have laughed and cried. Good heavens! people down there are still wearing the same old 'bodies' that we used to wear. Do you remember them, dear? Why, they were heavy as lead. Two 'legs', think of it, we used to go stalking along on those stilts; it's a wonder that we didn't fall. And

'bones' to hold 'em together, great cumbersome bones; how did we ever stand it? They looked to me like ancient armor or some ungodly machine.

"But then, each time we get a new dress the old one seems funny like that. You must remember how, down on Venus, we had a good laugh at the queer old motor suits we had used while on Mars. And yet these poor earthworms, my dear, hang to their suits like grim death, as if, forsooth, life would be over when the machinery broke. It is pitiful—and funny. I can dimly remember my horror, down on that stodgy old 'world', when I found my suit was wearing out. Oh, you may laugh, but it was really a terrible fear. And you must remember, yourself, how those old bodies hurt us when anything went wrong. They were so heavy that of course it was a terrible struggle to get out of them at all. How surprized the earthworms would be if they could know that today I had just slipped out of my suit to go up to Mars! It didn't take five minutes.

"It might occur to the dears that their suits aren't fit for changes. They don't wear the same clothes for Alaska and the tropics. And yet they go along in their noisy airplanes trying to get up to Mars in bodies that are suited to the 'world'. It is really very stupid. I saw some broken bodies, on earth, poor little huddles of clothes, so very like cast-off overcoats that one could hardly mistake them. How very blind we were! You remember how we used to put them into boxes and stick them underground while a parson prayed before blubbering mourners in solemn black duds? Really, one might as well cry and say prayers over his last winter's suit.

"But it *was* sad leaving old friends; I left some, on earth, that I've never seen again. We know now that, in those cases, they didn't really care for us. It was pretty hard to read a person's thought through all that camouflage; great masses of tallowy flesh, skulls, and, yes, even 'whiskers'. Do you remember the whiskers? I laughed aloud when I saw some on the suit of an earthworm. It was a clumsy suit worn by a man in that flat field we called 'Russia'. We used to think that the Russians were primitive; we, stalking stiffly around, fighting and worrying over our money—poor little, greedy, blind fools.

"They still use money down there—isn't it simply absurd? Of course their suits are so very hard to keep in condition that they need a lot of fuel, but, my dear, most of those earthworms have money to burn. They don't spend half of it on the upkeep of their 'bodies'. You remember we used to buy savage ornaments, Grace, to hang upon our necks. And yet we would worry and scurry over the face of the 'world' like a swarm of restless ants, searching for something to do. We were blind, absolutely blind. . . ."

When the inventor's daughter came in from a dance in the early hours of the morning, she found her father fast asleep on the couch beside his last invention. On his sunken, wrinkled face was a gentle smile of understanding.

"My, how peaceful he looks," she thought, "like a happy child! Poor dad, he has worked too hard; he's not long for this world. I wonder if that receiver of his is really any good. He won't make much out of it anyway, I guess; he always gets cheated. Well, money doesn't mean such a lot to him; he won't need it very long. I hardly dare to wake him, he looks so unearthly, but he ought to get to bed. He'll be awfully cramped, lying all night in his clothes."

The Archfiend's Fingers

By KIRK MASHBURN

John Power blundered into a strange and weird adventure during the Mardi Gras carnival in New Orleans

WHAT place this was into which he had stumbled, John Power neither knew nor cared. It was some shady cabaret; some dimly lighted dive of sinister shadows, perhaps near to the waterfront.

Slumped at a small table, he sensed little of what went on around him, remembered nothing of how he had become separated from his friends. It was carnival time, Mardi Gras Day in New Orleans. Vaguely, Power knew that he had celebrated too enthusiastically, had drunk too freely. There was a blank in his memory, and everything was rather more than hazy. He had no knowledge, even, that the thinning backwash of the carnival crowds no longer eddied in the street outside, had wearily dissolved in the early night.

Something of his surroundings obscurely troubled the bemused man. But it was too weighty and painful an effort to think. His head throbbed dully; nausea reached slyly, touched him with a tentative finger. It seemed that some one spoke, from across the table—

"Your pardon, sir. I have no wish to intrude, but you appear in need of something to lower your stomach, and raise your spirits."

In blurred, indistinct outline, Power saw that there was indeed another person seated opposite him. The stranger laughed dryly, as though his indulgence might be tinged with faintly contemptuous amusement. He beckoned, spoke succinctly to a none too clean waiter who answered the gesture.

A drink was brought, a palely green drink that shimmered in its glass, as if with flecks of gold in its depths. The stranger pressed the greenish drink upon the younger man with obdurate, if kindly guised insistence. Power groaned weakly, swallowed the virescent potion and nausea together; knowing he was shortly to be ill; hoping, with feeble malice, that he would be very unpleasantly ill. Then, perhaps, they would let him alone.

The draft stung his palate, seared his throat, struck his stomach like flowing fire. Amazingly, almost before he could gasp for breath, nausea vanished; the throbbing at his temples began to still, the fog to lift from his wits.

"Ah, that is better! Is it not?" The stranger nodded, smiled easily. Power looked across at him with mixed emotions, in which some trace of resentment lingered.

He took in the dark, saturnine countenance, about which there was something familiar—vaguely and disturbingly familiar. Somewhere, he thought, he had seen that high forehead; the whisper of memory strove to identify that arrogant, narrow-bridged nose, the oddly arched brows and the thin-lipped mouth that presently wore a smile of tolerant amusement.

Only the eyes were unfamiliar. John Power felt that he had seen the face without having looked into the dark, glittering eyes: his memory could not otherwise

have escaped some record of their chill fascination. It was as if he remembered a picture of the face, rather than the living countenance.

"I feel better," Power belatedly acknowledged. "That is—I don't feel ill, nor stupid, as I did. But"—he brushed a hand uncertainly across his eyes—"I don't know——"

The stranger—he made no move to identify himself; nor, strangely, did the thought occur to Power—the stranger laughed again. His was an enfolding laugh, a laugh of comprehension. It was as if he knew and understood all the insidious perplexities of mankind—and was glad of mankind's human frailty.

The waiter brought more of the green drinks. The stranger talked to Power while they were coming, and the latter listened. They drank often, always the green drinks; but Power had never felt more alive, his mind had never before seemed quite so active. Occasionally the stranger passed him cigarettes, apparently of tobacco in which the blending gave a peculiar distinctive taste that was not, however, displeasing at the moment.

At length the bracing effect Power had experienced with the first draft of the green liquor began to wear off. His head was resuming its throbbing, and thinking was again an effort. A feeling of uneasiness assailed him with recurring insistence. He sensed something disturbing in his surroundings; something that included his unknown yet oddly familiar table companion.

He decided to go while the effort was still possible—wondered that he had not taken his leave after that revitalizing first drink. With difficulty, he gained his feet, hastened by a sudden, rising impulse of dread: instinctive, insinuating dread, that came unsummoned and unexplained.

"Surely you will not leave so early?"

It was the stranger who spoke; but the simple question seemed, to Power's tortured fancy, fraught with irony and all the weight of a command. Giddily he sought to focus his thoughts. Thickly he repeated his intention of departing; thinking that, despite himself, he spoke so low that his words were almost whispered. Then he wondered whether, instead, he had shouted: every one in the place appeared to have centered attention suddenly in his direction.

As Power peered about him, each face among those present flared into startling distinctness—and what faces they were! There were nightmare visages of horror; grotesque, distorted faces that worked with slavering malice as they approached. . . . *(God! What place was this into which he had blundered?)* There were other faces, pale with the pallor of death, set masks of wo and utter, horrible despair.

One fantastic shape detached itself and came forward, apart from its fellows. It wore a Spanish helmet and breastplate of antique design, and was shod in high Spanish boots. The shadowing helmet blurred the face beneath, and that but intensified an impression of hideous fearsomeness. As the monster came beneath a ceiling light—*or was there a light there? was there even a ceiling?*—Power observed that its armor, its garments even to the high boots, looked to be splotched and smeared with red—bloody splotches that spread and merged until they wholly enveloped the sinister figure.

"Who are *you?*" Power snarled in uneasy anger. There was no answer. It was an easy and natural transition, in Power's irrational condition, from disturbed peevishness to sudden, flaring rage.

Still snarling, he staggered up, seized his chair and raised it to hurl at the mo-

tionless figure in ancient Spanish armor. But his table companion, who had sat motionless until the moment, sprang forward with outstretched hands.

Suddenly it seemed to Power that he saw the Stranger with blinding clearness, as if a veil had been torn aside—saw him, and knew him for what he was! At the sight of those reaching talons, fear snapped the last shreds of his control. He screamed aloud in panic—

"Help!" and again, "Help!"

From a door in the rear of the place leaped a figure, and Power shouted with joy upon recognizing the waiter who had served his table. But no!— Before his eyes, an awful metamorphosis occurred. . . . The attendant was but another demon come to join the grim, silently encircling throng.

"Away, fiends!" Power shrieked, again raising the chair he held. Before he could fling it, the Stranger had seized his wrist. To Power, it felt as if those taloned fingers seared through his flesh to the bone.

"Back! All of you stand back!" cried he of the clutching hands. "Let me deal with him alone!"

The words seared Power's brain: He was claimed by *the Archfiend himself!*

The thought gave final impetus to his madness. Wrenching violently from the grasp that pained his wrist, and swinging the chair before him, Power swept a path of havoc to a door.

The door opened. Power gained the street with a bound, fled over ancient flagstones down dim, narrow, cobbled streets. What course he covered in twisted flight, he never afterward knew. At the moment, he cared only that it was away from the clamorous pursuit upon his heels. At length, looking up, the fugitive recognized an enclosure within a high iron fence—a fence in which gaped an open gate.

Clanging shut and latching the gate in the faces of the foremost of the racing figures at his back, Power bounded across Jackson Square, where the hero of Chalmette sat his charger in bronze disdain of the turmoil boiling in his shadow.

The gate stopped pursuit for a precious moment. Power made for the opposite side of the square, where Saint Louis' Cathedral loomed out of the shadows, across a narrow street. He was spent; a myriad aches racked his heaving chest, but he knew that he *must* cross that street, gain the cathedral. *They* could never enter there!

He staggered into the open vestibule as the chimes pealed on the stroke of midnight. The period of carnival was over; Ash Wednesday and Lenten penitence were ushered in, while Power beat against the inner doors. The patter of pursuing feet sounded without, as their spent quarry sagged and crumpled to the floor.

"Sanctuary!" he sobbed. "Sanctuary!"

A sound as of rushing waters filled his ear-drums almost to bursting; darkness crowded in, encompassed him. The gasping figure in the cathedral vestibule sank into merciful oblivion.

POWER recovered his senses in what seemed a few seconds. Trip-hammers pounded inside his head, and he was conscious of acute and consuming thirst. Still dominating every other thought was the urge to crawl farther into the cathedral.

It had been so much darker a moment ago, he thought with vague wonder as he strove to drag himself forward. Something interfered with his effort; he peered dazedly to see what it was. Then Power sat up with a jerk that nearly burst his head, filling him with giddiness. He groaned aloud.

He was in a small white bed, in a

white-walled room with other small, white beds . . . a hospital ward! At his movement, a white-uniformed nurse came briskly forward.

"What happened?" Power croaked, ignoring the nurse's injunction to lie down and be quiet. "How long have I been here?"

"Since last night, when you were found collapsed at the doors of Saint Louis' Cathedral," the nurse replied. Her voice was brittle with disapproval.

"Why was I brought here?" Power demanded, gropingly insistent.

"Because you were suffering from the effects of acute alcoholism," tartly returned the nurse. "And also"—her tone was definitely accusing—"you were raving as the result of smoking *mari juana.*"

"*Mari juana?*" Power stupidly repeated.

"Sisal—hasheesh," crisply affirmed the nurse, turning away. "Will you please lie down?"

But Power had become aware of a dull pain that was apart from the bursting of his head. Lifting a hand, he stared at the bandage swathing his wrist. He would never be able to forget the Stranger who had shared his table, uninvited, in a shadowed, unknown place; hazily, he remembered smoking cigarettes of a peculiar, acrid taste.

But premonition whispered that drink nor drug would ever explain the reason for the gauze wrapped about his wrist. Slowly, Power removed the bandage.

Except that they were burned like a brand into the flesh, the marks upon his wrist were the livid imprint of a thumb and four long, pointed fingers.

Pirate's Hoard

By ALFRED I. TOOKE

Seven skulls upon the sand,
  White as any coral;
This one was a captain's skull,
  Cracked in bloody quarrel.
This one was a cabin boy's;
  These were mutineers'.
Seven skulls upon the sand,
  Bleaching through the years.

Seven chests of treasure strewn
  On the coral strand;
Seven skeletons on guard
  In the sifting sand.
Golden goblets, silver coins,
  Strings of precious stones;
Seven grinning skulls that watch
  Piles of bleaching bones.

The Eyrie

(Continued from page 150)

Hyman Vinunsky, of Cleveland, writes to the Eyrie: "*The Devil's Bride* is again the best story in the June issue. And *Black Invocation* by Paul Ernst—what a story that is! When the Latin formula is read, I can just imagine what a scene of weird power it makes. A wonderful story!"

"My curiosity is aroused—is there a Jules de Grandin, or did Seabury Quinn just create him?" writes Evelyn Martin, of Heltonville, Indiana. "I have been greatly enjoying *The Devil's Bride*. Please don't leave Jules de Grandin out of any more issues."

"I have been a reader of WEIRD TALES for the past four years and in that time I have come to enjoy each issue better than the one which preceded it," writes William H. Waters, Jr., of Gaithersburg, Maryland. "If I were to voice a preference for any of your authors (all of whom are good), it would certainly be Seabury Quinn. His Doctor de Grandin is a veritable Sherlock Holmes of the occult."

"In the name of Allah and a thousand minor deities," writes André Galet, of New York City, "will you please tell us why you propose to reprint such well-known stories as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* when they can be secured in almost every public library or bookstore? If you are really sincere in your desire to please us (the readers) and if it is humanly possible, why not publish in your reprint department Von Junzt's *Nameless Cults*, or the *Necronomicon* by Abdul Alhazred? Yours for more stories like *Kings of the Night*, *The Outsider*, and *The Picture*."

The favorite story in the June issue, as shown by your letters and votes, is *The Devil's Pool*, that amazing werewolf novelette by Greye La Spina. The fifth installment of Seabury Quinn's powerful novel of devil-worship, *The Devil's Bride*, was your second choice. What is your favorite story in this issue?

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE AUGUST WEIRD TALES ARE:

Story	Remarks
(1)----------	----------
(2)----------	----------
(3)----------	----------

I do not like the following stories:

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It will help us to know what kind of stories you want in Weird Tales if you will fill out this coupon and mail it to The Eyrie, Weird Tales, 840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Reader's name and address:

Frankenstein

By MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY

The Story Thus Far

ROBERT WALTON, captain of a ship seeking a passage through the Arctic Ocean, saw a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass over the ice-field to the north. In it sat a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature.

The next morning, after the ice had broken, he rescued from an ice-field another man, greatly emaciated. Only one of his dogs remained alive, for he had been marooned for some time. The man was Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist, who related to Captain Walton the incredible story of his life and how he came to be on the ice-floe.

Frankenstein had lived in Geneva with his father and his adopted sister, Elizabeth, to whom he was betrothed. His father sent him to school at Ingolstadt with his chum, Henry Clerval. There he progressed in his studies of natural science to such a point that he learned to create life.

Without taking Clerval into his secret, Frankenstein created a monster, eight feet tall and human in appearance, taking his materials from graveyards, slaughter-houses and dissecting-rooms. The monster was so terrible to look upon that Frankenstein fled from it, and the monster escaped.

Abandoned by its creator, the monster made its way to the vicinity of Frankenstein's home, where he murdered Frankenstein's younger brother, William, making it appear that Justine Moritz, a friend of the family, had committed the murder. Justine was convicted and sentenced to death; while Frankenstein, knowing that if he told the truth he would be considered a lunatic, was forced to keep silence.

Frankenstein met the monster in a hut in the Alps, and there the monster began to tell him how he had learned to talk, and how he had changed from a being with good impulses to a malevolent demon, simply because all hands were raised against him on account of his frightful appearance.

CHAPTER 12

"I LAY on my straw, but I could not sleep. I thought of the occurrences of the day. What chiefly struck me was the gentle manners of these people; and I

This story began in WEIRD TALES for May

longed to join them, but dared not. I remembered too well the treatment I had suffered the night before from the barbarous villagers, and resolved, whatever course of conduct I might hereafter think it right to pursue, that for the present I would remain quietly in my hovel, watching, and endeavoring to discover the motives which influenced their actions.

"The cottagers arose the next morning before the sun. The young woman arranged the cottage, and prepared the food; and the youth departed after the first meal.

"This day was passed in the same routine as that which preceded it. The young man was constantly employed out of doors, and the girl in various laborious occupations within. The old man, whom I soon perceived to be blind, employed his leisure hours on his instrument or in contemplation. Nothing could exceed the love and respect which the younger cottagers exhibited towards their venerable companion. They performed towards him every little office of affection and duty with gentleness; and he rewarded them by his benevolent smiles.

"They were not entirely happy. The young man and his companion often went apart, and appeared to weep. I saw no cause for their unhappiness; but I was deeply affected by it. If such lovely creatures were miserable, it was less strange that I, an imperfect and solitary being, should be wretched. Yet why were these gentle beings unhappy? They possessed a delightful house (for such it was in my eyes) and every luxury; they had a fire to warm them when chill, and delicious viands when hungry; they were dressed in excellent clothes; and, still more, they enjoyed one another's company and speech, interchanging each day looks of affection and kindness. What did their tears imply? Did they really express pain? I was at first unable to solve these questions.

"A considerable period elapsed before I discovered one of the causes of the uneasiness of this amiable family: it was poverty; and they suffered that evil in a very distressing degree. Their nourishment consisted entirely of the vegetables of their garden, and the milk of one cow, which gave very little during the winter, when its masters could scarcely procure food to support it. They often, I believe, suffered the pangs of hunger very poignantly, especially the two younger cottagers; for several times they placed food before the old man when they reserved none for themselves.

"This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption; but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained, and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots, which I gathered from a neighboring wood.

"I discovered also another means through which I was enabled to assist their labors. I found that the youth spent a great part of each day in collecting wood for the family fire; and, during the night, I often took his tools, the use of which I quickly discovered, and brought home firing sufficient for the consumption of several days.

"I remember the first time that I did this the young woman, when she opened the door in the morning, appeared greatly astonished on seeing a great pile of wood on the outside. She uttered some words in a loud voice, and the youth joined her, who also expressed surprize. I observed, with pleasure, that he did not go to the forest that day, but spent it in repairing the cottage and cultivating the garden.

"By degrees I made a discovery of still greater moment. I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived

that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers. This was indeed a god-like science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it. But I was baffled in every attempt I made for this purpose. Their pronunciation was quick; and the words they uttered, not having any apparent connection with visible objects, I was unable to discover any clue by which I could unravel the mystery of their reference. By great application, however, and after having remained during the space of several revolutions of the moon in my hovel, I discovered the names that were given to some of the most familiar objects of discourse; I learned and applied the words, *fire, milk, bread,* and *wood.* I learned also the names of the cottagers themselves. The youth and his companion had each of them several names, but the old man had only one, which was *father.* The girl was called *sister,* or *Agatha;* and the youth *Felix, brother,* or *son.* I can not describe the delight I felt when I learned the ideas appropriated to each of these sounds, and was able to pronounce them. I distinguished several other words, without being able as yet to understand or apply them; such as *good, dearest, unhappy.*

"I SPENT the winter in this manner. The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me: when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys. I saw few human beings besides them; and if any other happened to enter the cottage, their harsh manners and rude gait only enhanced to me the superior accomplishments of my friends.

"The old man, I could perceive, often endeavored to encourage his children, as sometimes I found that he called them, to cast off their melancholy. He would talk in a cheerful accent, with an expression of goodness that bestowed pleasure even upon me. Agatha listened with respect, her eyes sometimes filled with tears, which she endeavored to wipe away unperceived; but I generally found that her countenance and tone were more cheerful after having listened to the exhortations of her father. It was not thus with Felix. He was always the saddest of the group; and, even to my unpractised senses, he appeared to have suffered more deeply than his friends. But if his countenance was more sorrowful, his voice was more cheerful than that of his sister, especially when he addressed the old man.

"I could mention innumerable instances, which, although slight, marked the dispositions of these amiable cottagers. In the midst of poverty and want, Felix carried with pleasure to his sister the first little white flower that peeped out from beneath the snowy ground. Early in the morning, before she had risen, he cleared away the snow that obstructed her path to the milk-house, drew water from the well, and brought the wood from the out-house, where, to his perpetual astonishment, he found his store always replenished by an invisible hand. In the day, I believe, he worked sometimes for a neighboring farmer, because he often went forth, and did not return until dinner, yet brought no wood with him. At other times he worked in the garden; but, as there was little to do in the frosty season, he read to the old man and Agatha.

"This reading had puzzled me extremely at first; but, by degrees, I discovered that he uttered many of the same sounds when he read as when he talked. I conjectured, therefore, that he found on the paper signs for speech which he understood, and I ardently longed to comprehend these also; but how was that possible, when I did not even understand the sounds for which they stood as signs? I

improved, however, sensibly in this science, but not sufficiently to follow up any kind of conversation, although I applied my whole mind to the endeavor: for I easily perceived that, although I eagerly longed to discover myself to the cottagers, I ought not to make the attempt until I had first become master of their language; which knowledge might enable me to make them overlook the deformity of my figure; for with this also the contrast perpetually presented to my eyes had made me acquainted.

"I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity.

"As the sun became warmer, and the light of day longer, the snow vanished, and I beheld the bare trees and the black earth. From this time Felix was more employed; and the heart-moving indications of impending famine disappeared.

"The old man, leaning on his son, walked each day at noon, when it did not rain, as I found it was called when the heavens poured forth its waters. This frequently took place; but a high wind quickly dried the earth, and the season became far more pleasant than it had been.

"My mode of life in my hovel was uniform. During the morning, I attended the motions of the cottagers; and when they were dispersed in various occupations I slept: the remainder of the day was spent in observing my friends. When they had retired to rest, if there was any moon, or the night was starlight, I went into the woods, and collected my own food and fuel for the cottage. When I returned, as often as it was necessary, I cleared their path from the snow, and performed those offices that I had seen done by Felix. I afterwards found that these labors, performed by an invisible hand, greatly astonished them; and once or twice I heard them, on these occasions, utter the words *good spirit, wonderful;* but I did not then understand the signification of these terms.

"My thoughts now became more active, and I longed to discover the motives and feelings of these lovely creatures; I was inquisitive to know why Felix appeared so miserable and Agatha so sad. I thought (foolish wretch!) that it might be in my power to restore happiness to these deserving people. When I slept, or was absent, the forms of the venerable blind father, the gentle Agatha, and the excellent Felix flitted before me. I looked upon them as superior beings, who would be the arbiters of my future destiny. I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them, and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanor and conciliating words, I should first win their favor, and afterwards their love.

"These thoughts exhilarated me, and led me to apply with fresh ardor to the acquiring the art of language. My organs were indeed harsh, but supple; and although my voice was very unlike the soft music of their tones, yet I pronounced such words as I understood with tolerable ease.

"The pleasant showers and genial warmth of spring greatly altered the aspect of the earth. Men, who before this change seemed to have been hid in caves, dispersed themselves, and were employed in various arts of cultivation. The birds

sang in more cheerful notes, and the leaves began to bud forth on the trees. Happy, happy earth! fit habitation for gods, which, so short a time before, was bleak, damp, and unwholesome. My spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope and anticipations of joy.

CHAPTER 13

"I NOW hasten to the more moving part of my story. I shall relate events that impressed me with feelings which, from what I had been, have made me what I am.

"Spring advanced rapidly; the weather became fine, and the skies cloudless. It surprized me that what before was desert and gloomy should now bloom with the most beautiful flowers and verdure. My senses were gratified and refreshed by a thousand scents of delight, and a thousand sights of beauty.

"It was on one of these days, when my cottagers periodically rested from labor—the old man played on his guitar, and the children listened to him—that I observed the countenance of Felix was melancholy beyond expression; he sighed frequently; and once his father paused in his music, and I conjectured by his manner that he inquired the cause of his son's sorrow. Felix replied in a cheerful accent, and the old man was recommencing his music when some one tapped at the door.

"It was a lady on horseback, accompanied by a countryman as a guide. The lady was dressed in a dark suit, and covered with a thick black veil. Agatha asked a question; to which the stranger only replied by pronouncing, in a sweet accent, the name of Felix. Her voice was musical, but unlike that of either of my friends. On hearing this word, Felix came up hastily to the lady; who, when she saw him, threw up her veil, and I beheld a countenance of angelic beauty and expression. Her hair was of a shining raven black, and curiously braided; her eyes were dark, but gentle, although animated; her features of a regular proportion, and her complexion wondrously fair, each cheek tinged with a lovely pink.

"Felix seemed ravished with delight when he saw her, every trait of sorrow vanished from his face, and it instantly expressed a degree of ecstatic joy, of which I could hardly have believed it capable; his eyes sparkled as his cheek flushed with pleasure; and at that moment I thought him as beautiful as the stranger. She appeared affected by different feelings; wiping a few tears from her lovely eyes, she held out her hand to Felix, who kissed it rapturously, and called her, as well as I could distinguish, his sweet Arabian. She did not appear to understand him, but smiled.

"He assisted her to dismount, and dismissing her guide, conducted her into the cottage. Some conversation took place between him and his father; and the young stranger knelt at the old man's feet, and would have kissed his hand, but he raised her, and embraced her affectionately.

"I soon perceived that, although the stranger uttered articulate sounds, and appeared to have a language of her own, she was neither understood by, nor herself understood, the cottagers. They made many signs which I did not comprehend; but I saw that her presence diffused gladness through the cottage, dispelling their sorrow as the sun dissipates the morning mists. Felix seemed peculiarly happy, and with smiles of delight welcomed his Arabian. Agatha, the ever-gentle Agatha, kissed the hands of the lovely stranger; and, pointing to her brother, made signs which appeared to me to mean that he had been sorrowful until she came.

"Some hours passed thus, while they, by their countenances, expressed joy, the cause of which I did not comprehend. Presently I found, by the frequent recurrence of some sound which the stranger repeated after them, that she was endeavoring to learn their language; and the idea instantly occurred to me that I should make use of the same instructions to the same end. The stranger learned about twenty words at the first lesson; most of them, indeed, were those which I had before understood, but I profited by the others.

"As night came on, Agatha and the Arabian retired early. When they separated, Felix kissed the hand of the stranger, and said, 'Good night, sweet Safie.' He sat up much longer, conversing with his father; and, by the frequent repetition of her name, I conjectured that their lovely guest was the subject of their conversation. I ardently desired to understand them, and bent every faculty towards that purpose, but found it utterly impossible.

"The next morning Felix went out to his work; and, after the usual occupations of Agatha were finished, the Arabian sat at the feet of the old man, and, taking his guitar, played some airs so entrancingly beautiful that they at once drew tears of sorrow and delight from my eyes. She sang, and her voice flowed in a rich cadence, swelling or dying away, like a nightingale of the woods.

"When she had finished, she gave the guitar to Agatha, who at first declined it. She played a simple air, and her voice accompanied it in sweet accents, but unlike the wondrous strain of the stranger. The old man appeared enraptured, and said some words, which Agatha endeavored to explain to Safie, and by which he appeared to wish to express that she bestowed on him the greatest delight by her music.

"The days now passed as peaceably as before, with the sole alteration that joy had taken place of sadness in the countenances of my friends. Safie was always gay and happy; she and I improved rapidly in the knowledge of language, so that in two months I began to comprehend most of the words uttered by my protectors.

"In the meanwhile also the black ground was covered with herbage, and the green banks interspersed with innumerable flowers, sweet to the scent and the eyes, stars of pale radiance among the moonlight woods; the sun became warmer, the nights clear and balmy; and my nocturnal rambles were an extreme pleasure to me, although they were considerably shortened by the late setting and early rising of the sun; for I never ventured abroad during daylight, fearful of meeting with the same treatment I had formerly endured in the first village which I entered.

"My days were spent in close attention, that I might more speedily master the language; and I may boast that I improved more rapidly than the Arabian, who understood very little, and conversed in broken accents, whilst I comprehended and could imitate almost every word that was spoken.

"While I improved in speech, I also learned the science of letters, as it was taught to the stranger; and this opened before me a wide field for wonder and delight.

"The book from which Felix instructed Safie was Volney's *Ruins of Empires.* I should not have understood the purport of this book, had not Felix, in reading it, given very minute explanations. He had chosen this work, he said, because the declamatory style was framed in imitation of the eastern authors. Through this work I obtained a cursory knowledge of history, and a view of the several empires at pres-

ent existing in the world; it gave me an insight into the manners, governments, and religions of the different nations of the earth. I heard of the slothful Asiatics; of the stupendous genius and mental activity of the Grecians; of the wars and wonderful virtue of the early Romans—of their subsequent degenerating—of the decline of that mighty empire; of chivalry, Christianity, and kings. I heard of the discovery of the American hemisphere, and wept with Safie over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants.

"These wonderful narrations inspired me with strange feelings. Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil principle, and at another as all that can be conceived of noble and god-like. To be a great and virtuous man appeared the highest honor that can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record have been, appeared the lowest degradation, a condition more abject than that of the blind mole or harmless worm. For a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased, and I turned away with disgust and loathing.

"Every conversation of the cottagers now opened new wonders to me. While I listened to the instructions which Felix bestowed upon the Arabian, the strange system of human society was explained to me. I heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood.

"The words induced me to turn towards myself. I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow-creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these advantages; but, without either, he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few! And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they, and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me. Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned?

"I CAN not describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me: I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. Oh, that I had for ever remained in my native wood, nor known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat!

"Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to the mind, when it has once seized on it, like a lichen on the rock. I wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling; but I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death—a state which I feared yet did not understand. I admired virtue and good feelings, and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers; but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows. The gentle words of Agatha, and the animated smiles

of the charming Arabian, were not for me. The mild exhortations of the old man, and the lively conversation of the loved Felix, were not for me. Miserable, unhappy wretch!

"Other lessons were impressed upon me even more deeply. I heard of the difference of sexes; and the birth and growth of children; how the father doted on the smiles of the infant, and the lively sallies of the older child; how all the life and cares of the mother were wrapped up in the precious charge; how the mind of youth expanded and gained knowledge; of brother, sister, and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds.

"But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me, or who claimed any intercourse with me. What was I?

"I will soon explain to what these feelings tended; but allow me now to return to the cottagers, whose story excited in me such various feelings of indignation, delight, and wonder, but which all terminated in additional love and reverence for my protectors (for so I loved, in an innocent, half-painful self-deceit, to call them).

CHAPTER 14

"SOME time elapsed before I learned the history of my friends. It was one which could not fail to impress itself deeply on my mind, unfolding as it did a number of circumstances, each interesting and wonderful to one so utterly inexperienced as I was.

"The name of the old man was De Lacey. He was descended from a good family in France, where he had lived for many years in affluence, respected by his superiors and beloved by his equals. His son was bred in the service of his country; and Agatha had ranked with ladies of the highest distinction. A few months before my arrival they had lived in a large and luxurious city called Paris, surrounded by friends, and possessed of every enjoyment which virtue, refinement of intellect, or taste, accompanied by a moderate fortune, could afford.

"The father of Safie had been the cause of their ruin. He was a Turkish merchant, and had inhabited Paris for many years, when, for some reason which I could not learn, he became obnoxious to the government. He was seized and cast into prison the very day that Safie arrived from Constantinople to join him. He was tried and condemned to death. The injustice of his sentence was very flagrant; all Paris was indignant; and it was judged that his religion and wealth, rather than the crime alleged against him, had been the cause of his condemnation.

"Felix had accidentally been present at the trial; his horror and indignation were uncontrollable when he heard the decision of the court. He made, at that moment, a solemn vow to deliver him, and then looked around for the means. After many fruitless attempts to gain admittance to the prison, he found a strongly grated window in an unguarded part of the building which lighted the dungeon of the unfortunate Mahometan; who, loaded with chains, waited in despair the execution of the barbarous sentence.

"Felix visited the grate at night, and made known to the prisoner his intentions in his favor. The Turk, amazed and delighted, endeavored to kindle the zeal of his deliverer by promises of reward and wealth. Felix rejected his offers with con-

tempt; yet when he saw the lovely Safie, who was allowed to visit her father, and who, by her gestures, expressed her lively gratitude, the youth could not help owning to his own mind that the captive possessed a treasure which would fully reward his toil and hazard.

"The Turk quickly perceived the impression that his daughter had made on the heart of Felix, and endeavored to secure him more entirely in his interests by the promise of her hand in marriage, so soon as he should be conveyed to a place of safety. Felix was too delicate to accept this offer; yet he looked forward to the probability of the event as to the consummation of his happiness.

"During the ensuing days, while the preparations were going forward for the escape of the merchant, the zeal of Felix was warmed by several letters that he received from this lovely girl, who found means to express her thoughts in the language of her lover by the aid of an old man, a servant of her father, who understood French. She thanked him in the most ardent terms for his intended services towards her parent; and at the same time she gently deplored her own fate.

"Safie related that her mother was a Christian Arab, seized and made a slave by the Turks; recommended by her beauty, she had won the heart of the father of Safie, who married her. The young girl spoke in high and enthusiastic terms of her mother, who, born in freedom, spurned the bondage to which she was now reduced. She instructed her daughter in the tenets of her religion, and taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect, and an independence of spirit, forbidden to the female followers of Mahomet.

"This lady died; but her lessons were indelibly impressed on the mind of Safie, who sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia and being immured within the walls of a harem, allowed only to occupy herself with infantile amusements, ill suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and a noble emulation for virtue. The prospect of marrying a Christian, and remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society, was enchanting to her.

"The day for the execution of the Turk was fixed; but, on the night previous to it, he quitted his prison, and before morning was distant many leagues from Paris. Felix had procured passports in the name of his father, sister, and himself. He had previously communicated his plan to the former, who aided the deceit by quitting his house, under the pretense of a journey, and concealed himself, with his daughter, in an obscure part of Paris.

"FELIX conducted the fugitives through France to Lyons, and across Mont Cenis to Leghorn, where the merchant had decided to wait a favorable opportunity of passing into some part of the Turkish dominions.

"Safie resolved to remain with her father until the moment of his departure, before which time the Turk renewed his promise that she should be united to his deliverer; and Felix remained with them in expectation of that event; and in the meantime he enjoyed the society of the Arabian, who exhibited towards him the simplest and tenderest affection. They conversed with one another through the means of an interpreter, and sometimes with the interpretation of looks; and Safie sang to him the divine airs of her native country.

"The Turk allowed this intimacy to take place, and encouraged the hopes of the youthful lovers, while in his heart he had formed far other plans. He loathed the idea that his daughter should be

united to a Christian; but he feared the resentment of Felix, if he should appear lukewarm; for he knew that he was still in the power of his deliverer, if he should choose to betray him to the Italian state which they inhabited. He revolved a thousand plans by which he should be enabled to prolong the deceit until it might be no longer necessary, and secretly to take his daughter with him when he departed. His plans were facilitated by the news which arrived from Paris.

"The government of France were greatly enraged at the escape of their victim, and spared no pains to detect and punish his deliverer. The plot of Felix was quickly discovered, and De Lacey and Agatha were thrown into prison. The news reached Felix, and roused him from his dream of pleasure. His blind and aged father, and his gentle sister, lay in a noisome dungeon, while he enjoyed the free air and the society of her whom he loved. This idea was torture to him. He quickly arranged with the Turks that if the latter should find a favorable opportunity for escape before Felix could return to Italy, Safie should remain as a boarder at a convent at Leghorn; and then, quitting the lovely Arabian, he hastened to Paris, and delivered himself up to the vengeance of the law, hoping to free De Lacey and Agatha by this proceeding.

"He did not succeed. They remained confined for five months before the trial took place; the result of which deprived them of their fortune, and condemned them to a perpetual exile from their native country.

"They found a miserable asylum in the cottage in Germany where I discovered them. Felix soon learned that the treacherous Turk, for whom he and his family endured such unheard-of oppression, on discovering that his deliverer was thus reduced to poverty and ruin, became a traitor to good feeling and honor, and had quitted Italy with his daughter, insultingly sending Felix a pittance of money, to aid him, as he said, in some plan of future maintenance.

"Such were the events that preyed on the heart of Felix, and rendered him, when I first saw him, the most miserable of his family. He could have endured poverty; and while this distress had been the meed of his virtue, he gloried in it: but the ingratitude of the Turk, and the loss of his beloved Safie, were misfortunes more bitter and irreparable. The arrival of the Arabian now infused new life into his soul.

"When the news reached Leghorn that Felix was deprived of his wealth and rank, the merchant commanded his daughter to think no more of her lover, but to prepare to return to her native country. The generous nature of Safie was outraged by this command; she attempted to expostulate with her father, but he left her angrily, reiterating his tyrannical mandate.

"A few days after, the Turk entered his daughter's apartment, and told her hastily that he had reason to believe that his residence at Leghorn had been divulged, and that he should speedily be delivered up to the French government; he had, consequently, hired a vessel to convey him to Constantinople, for which city he should sail in a few hours. He intended to leave his daughter under the care of a confidential servant, to follow at her leisure with the greater part of his property, which had not yet arrived at Leghorn.

"When alone, Safie resolved in her own mind the plan of conduct that it would become her to pursue in this emergency. A residence in Turkey was abhorrent to her; her religion and her feelings were alike adverse to it. By some papers of her father, which fell into her hands, she heard of the exile of her lover, and learnt the name of the spot where he then resided. She hesitated some time, but at

length she formed her determination. Taking with her some jewels that belonged to her, and a sum of money, she quitted Italy with an attendant, a native of Leghorn, but who understood the common language of Turkey, and departed for Germany.

"She arrived in safety at a town about twenty leagues from the cottage of De Lacey, when her attendant fell dangerously ill. Safie nursed her with the most devoted affection; but the poor girl died, and the Arabian was left alone, unacquainted with the language of the country, and utterly ignorant of the customs of the world. She fell, however, into good hands. The Italian had mentioned the name of the spot for which they were bound; and, after her death, the woman of the house in which they had lived took care that Safie should arrive in safety at the cottage of her lover.

CHAPTER 15

"SUCH was the history of my beloved cottagers. It impressed me deeply. I learned, from the views of social life which it developed, to admire their virtues, and to deprecate the vices of mankind.

"As yet I looked upon crime as a distant evil; benevolence and generosity were ever present before me, inciting within me a desire to become an actor in the busy scene where so many admirable qualities were called forth and displayed. But, in giving an account of the progress of my intellect, I must not omit a circumstance which occurred in the beginning of the month of August of the same year.

"One night, during my accustomed visit to the neighboring wood, where I collected my own food, and brought home firing for my protectors, I found on the ground a leathern portmanteau, containing several articles of dress and some books. I eagerly seized the prize, and returned with it to my hovel. Fortunately the books were written in the language the elements of which I had acquired at the cottage; they consisted of *Paradise Lost,* a volume of *Plutarch's Lives,* and the *Sorrows of Werther.* The possession of these treasures gave me extreme delight; I now continually studied and exercised my mind upon these histories, whilst my friends were employed in their ordinary occupations.

"I can hardly describe to you the effect of these books. They produced in me an infinity of new images and feelings that sometimes raised me to ecstasy, but more frequently sunk me into the lowest dejection. In the *Sorrows of Werther,* besides the interest of its simple and affecting story, so many opinions are canvassed, and so many lights thrown upon what had hitherto been to me obscure subjects, that I found in it a never-ending source of speculation and astonishment. The gentle and domestic manners it described, combined with lofty sentiments and feelings, which had for their object something out of self, accorded well with my experience among my protectors, and with the wants which were for ever alive in my own bosom. But I thought Werther himself a more divine being than I had ever beheld or imagined; his character contained no pretension, but it sunk deep. The disquisitions upon death and suicide were calculated to fill me with wonder.

"As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike to the beings concerning whom I read, and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathized with, and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none and related to none. 'The path of my departure was free;' and there was none to lament my annihilation.

My person was hideous and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them.

"The volume of *Plutarch's Lives*, which I possessed, contained the histories of the first founders of the ancient republics. This book had a far different effect upon me from the *Sorrows of Werther*. I learned from Werther's imaginations despondency and gloom: but Plutarch taught me high thoughts; he elevated me above the wretched sphere of my own reflections to admire and love the heroes of past ages.

"Many things I read surpassed my understanding and experience. I had a very confused knowledge of kingdoms, wide extents of country, mighty rivers, and boundless seas. But I was perfectly unacquainted with towns, and large assemblages of men. The cottage of my protectors had been the only school in which I had studied human nature; but this book developed new and mightier scenes of action. I read of men concerned in public affairs, governing or massacring their species. I felt the greatest ardor for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice, as far as I understood the signification of those terms, relative as they were, as I applied them, to pleasure and pain alone. Induced by these feelings, I was of course led to admire peaceable lawgivers, Numa, Solon, and Lycurgus, in preference to Romulus and Theseus. The patriarchal lives of my protectors caused these impressions to take a firm hold on my mind; perhaps, if my first introduction to humanity had been made by a young soldier, burning for glory and slaughter, I should have been imbued with different sensations.

"But *Paradise Lost* excited different and far deeper emotions. I read it, as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hands, as a true history. It moved every feeling of wonder and awe that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from, beings of a superior nature: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone.

"Another circumstance strengthened and confirmed these feelings. Soon after my arrival in the hovel, I discovered some papers in the pocket of the dress which I had taken from your laboratory. At first I had neglected them; but now that I was able to decipher the characters in which they were written, I began to study them with diligence. It was your journal of the four months that preceded my creation. You minutely described in these papers every step you took in the progress of your work; this history was mingled with accounts of domestic occurrences. You, doubtless, recollect these papers. Here they are. Everything is related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin; the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it is set in view; the minutest description of my odious and loathsome person is given, in language which painted your own horrors and rendered mine indelible.

"I sickened as I read. 'Hateful day when I received life!' I exclaimed in agony. 'Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even *you* turned from me in disgust? God, in pity,

made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred.'

"THESE were the reflections of my hours of despondency and solitude; but when I contemplated the virtues of the cottagers, their amiable and benevolent dispositions, I persuaded myself that when they should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues, they would compassionate me, and overlook my personal deformity. Could they turn from their door one, however monstrous, who solicited their compassion and friendship? I resolved at least, not to despair, but in every way to fit myself for an interview with them which would decide my fate.

"I postponed this attempt for some months longer; for the importance attached to its success inspired me with a dread lest I should fail. Besides, I found that my understanding improved so much with every day's experience that I was unwilling to commence this undertaking until a few more months should have added to my sagacity.

"Several changes, in the meantime, took place in the cottage. The presence of Safie diffused happiness among its inhabitants; and I also found that a greater degree of plenty reigned there. Felix and Agatha spent more time in amusement and conversation, and were assisted in their labors by servants. They did not appear rich, but they were contented and happy; their feelings were serene and peaceful, while mine became every day more tumultuous. Increase of knowledge only discovered to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was. I cherished hope, it is true; but it vanished when I beheld my person reflected in water,

"I endeavored to crush these fears, and to fortify myself for the trial which in a few months I resolved to undergo; and sometimes I allowed my thoughts, unchecked by reason, to ramble in the fields of Paradise, and dared to fancy amiable and lovely creatures sympathizing with my feelings, and cheering my gloom; their angelic countenances breathed smiles of consolation. But it was all a dream; no Eve soothed my sorrows, nor shared my thoughts; I was alone. I remembered Adam's supplication to his Creator. But where was mine? He had abandoned me: and, in the bitterness of my heart, I cursed him.

"Autumn passed thus. I saw, with surprize and grief, the leaves decay and fall, and nature again assume the barren and bleak appearance it had worn when I first beheld the woods and the lovely moon. Yet I did not heed the bleakness of the weather; I was better fitted by my conformation for the endurance of cold than heat. But my chief delights were the sight of the flowers, the birds, and all the gay apparel of summer; when those deserted me, I turned with more attention towards the cottagers. Their happiness was not decreased by the absence of summer. They loved, and sympathized with one another; and their joys, depending on each other, were not interrupted by the casualties that took place around them. The more I saw of them, the greater became my desire to claim their protection and kindness; my heart yearned to be known and loved by these amiable creatures: to see their sweet looks directed towards me with affection was the utmost limit of my ambition. I dared not think that they would turn them from me with disdain and horror. The poor that stopped at their door were never driven away.

"The winter advanced, and an entire revolution of the seasons had taken place

(Please turn to page 286)

Coming Next Month

AS SARDANAPALUS, King of Babylon, had feasted with his Magi, and women, and favorites, and all the sycophants of a fabulously wealthy court, so did Prince Dena ibn Zodh, in his black and scarlet robes of ceremony, sit with Evadne at his side on the night of sacrifice.

Wild beasts, controlled by the magnetic power of the Magi, rolled in luxurious ease on silken rugs; the great tables gleamed with jewelled goblets and golden dishes; a thousand instruments mingled with the clamor of a thousand tongues; waves of intoxicating perfumes were wafted up from vaults beneath the palace; myriads of lamps winked and blazed from roof and walls and pillars. At intervals a dancer would float out on to the great white marble circle of floor, round which the tables were grouped, veiled only in her cloud of hair, and moving like a blown leaf before the wind would draw an outburst of applause that set the great beasts roaring until the domed hall rang.

Vast, sinister, marvellous as the dreams of a hashish-eater, the long orgy at last drew to an end. The revellers lay back amidst their cushions, while Prince Dena rose from his place and led Evadne to the center of the enclosed circle.

He held up a hand, and silence fell over the entire multitude of feasters; not even a beast but seemed suddenly turned to a lifeless statue. Sir Hugh Willett and Hadur, who had sat watchful and silent during the long revel, looked up with tightening nerves as the destined Bride stood facing the vast assembly.

A single garment of marvellously wrought gold tissue outlined her lovely slenderness. Her shining head was bound with a richly jewelled circlet of gold, and over her eyes its clasp glittered bright and evil in the myriads of lamps. So brilliant were the gems that formed this clasp that it had all the effect of a living flame, and Sir Hugh shuddered as he saw the hatefully familiar symbol of Melek Taos flash, and flash again about Evadne's dreaming misted eyes.

"The Hour is at hand!" the High Priest's ringing tones pierced even the wine-sodden senses of the revellers. "This is my Hour, my Hour of love, my Hour of fulfilment, the Hour of mystic communion with Melek Taos, when he in me, and I in him, rejoice in the Bride! . . .

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September WEIRD TALES Out August 1

(Continued from page 284)

since I awoke into life. My attention, at this time, was solely directed towards my plan of introducing myself into the cottage of my protectors. I revolved many projects; but that on which I finally fixed was, to enter the dwelling when the blind old man should be alone. I had sagacity enough to discover that the unnatural hideousness of my person was the chief object of horror with those who had formerly beheld me. My voice, although harsh, had nothing terrible in it; I thought, therefore, that if, in the absence of his children, I could gain the good-will and mediation of the old De Lacey, I might by this means, be tolerated by my younger protectors.

"One day, when the sun shone on the red leaves that strewed the ground, and diffused cheerfulness, although it denied warmth, Safie, Agatha, and Felix departed on a long country walk, and the old man, at his own desire, was left alone in the cottage. When his children had departed, he took up his guitar, and played several mournful but sweet airs, more sweet and mournful than I had ever heard him play before. At first his countenance was illuminated with pleasure, but, as he continued, thoughtfulness and sadness succeeded; at length, laying aside the instrument, he sat absorbed in reflection.

"My heart beat quick; this was the hour and moment of trial which would decide my hopes or realize my fears. The servants were gone to a neighboring fair. All was silent in and around the cottage: it was an excellent opportunity; yet, when I proceeded to execute my plan, my limbs failed me, and I sank to the ground. Again I rose; and, exerting all the firmness of which I was master, removed the planks which I had placed before my hovel to conceal my retreat. The fresh air revived me, and, with renewed determination, I approached the door of their cottage.

"I knocked. 'Who is there?' said the old man—'Come in.'

"I entered; 'Pardon this intrusion,' said I: 'I am a traveller in want of a little rest; you would greatly oblige me if you would allow me to remain a few minutes before the fire.'

" 'Enter,' said De Lacey; 'and I will try in what manner I can relieve your wants; but, unfortunately, my children are from home, and, as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you.'

" 'Do not trouble yourself, my kind host, I have food; it is warmth and rest only that I need.'

"I SAT down, and a silence ensued. I knew that every minute was precious to me, yet I remained irresolute in what manner to commence the interview; when the old man addressed me——

" 'By your language, stranger, I suppose you are my countryman;—are you French?'

" 'No; but I was educated by a French family, and understand that language only. I am now going to claim the protection of some friends, whom I sincerely love, and of whose favor I have some hopes.'

" 'Are they Germans?'

" 'No, they are French. But let us change the subject. I am an unfortunate and deserted creature; I look around, and I have no relation or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have never seen me, and know little of me. I am full of fears; for if I fail there, I am an outcast in the world for ever.'

" 'Do not despair. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate; but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity. Rely, therefore, on your hopes;

and if these friends are good and amiable, do not despair.'

" 'They are kind—they are the most excellent creatures in the world; but, unfortunately, they are prejudiced against me. I have good dispositions; my life has been hitherto harmless, and in some degree beneficial; but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster.'

" 'That is indeed unfortunate; but if you are really blameless, can not you undeceive them?'

" 'I am about to undertake that task; and it is on that account that I feel so many overwhelming terrors. I tenderly love these friends; I have, unknown to them, been for many months in the habits of daily kindness towards them; but they believe that I wish to injure them, and it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome.'

" 'Where do these friends reside?'

" 'Near this spot.'

"The old man paused, and then continued, 'If you will unreservedly confide to me the particulars of your tale, I perhaps may be of use in undeceiving them. I am blind, and can not judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere. I am poor, and an exile; but it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature.'

" 'Excellent man! I thank you, and accept your generous offer. You raise me from the dust by this kindness; and I trust that, by your aid, I shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your fellow-creatures.'

" 'Heaven forbid! even if you were really criminal; for that can only drive you to desperation, and not instigate you to virtue. I also am unfortunate; I and my family have been condemned, although

A Little Jumping Goat Gave Its Name to

TAXICAB

Taxicab is an abbreviation of *taximeter-cabriolet*—a vehicle carrying an instrument for automatically registering the fare. The name *cabriolet* is the diminutive of the French *cabriole*, meaning "a leap" like that of a goat, and was applied to this type of carriage because of its light, bounding motion. *Cabriole* came from the Italian *capriola* meaning "a somersault," from Latin *caper* "a he-goat," *capra* "a she-goat." There are thousands of such stories about the origins of English words in

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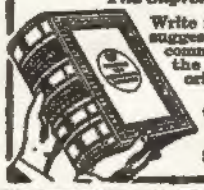

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NEXT MONTH

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By HAROLD WARD

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innocent: judge, therefore, if I do not feel for your misfortunes.'

" 'How can I thank you, my best and only benefactor? From your lips first have I heard the voice of kindness directed towards me; I shall be for ever grateful; and your present humanity assures me of success with those friends whom I am on the point of meeting.'

" 'May I know the names and residence of those friends?'

"I paused. This, I thought, was the moment of decision, which was to rob me of, or bestow happiness on me for ever. I struggled vainly for firmness sufficient to answer him, but the effort destroyed all my remaining strength; I sank on the chair and sobbed aloud. At that moment I heard the steps of my younger protectors. I had not a moment to lose; but, seizing the hand of the old man, I cried, 'Now is the time!—save and protect me! You and your family are the friends whom I seek. Do not you desert me in the hour of trial!'

" 'Great God!' exclaimed the old man, 'who are you?'

"At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? Agatha fainted; and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung: in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sunk within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained. I saw him on the point of repeating his blow, when, overcome by pain and anguish, I quitted the cottage and in the general tumult escaped unperceived to my hovel."

(To be continued next month)

W. T.—9

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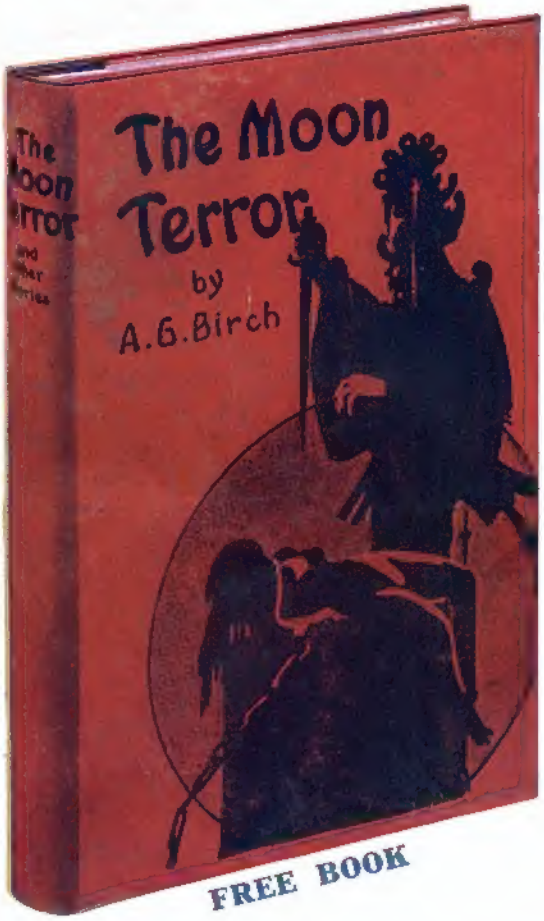

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